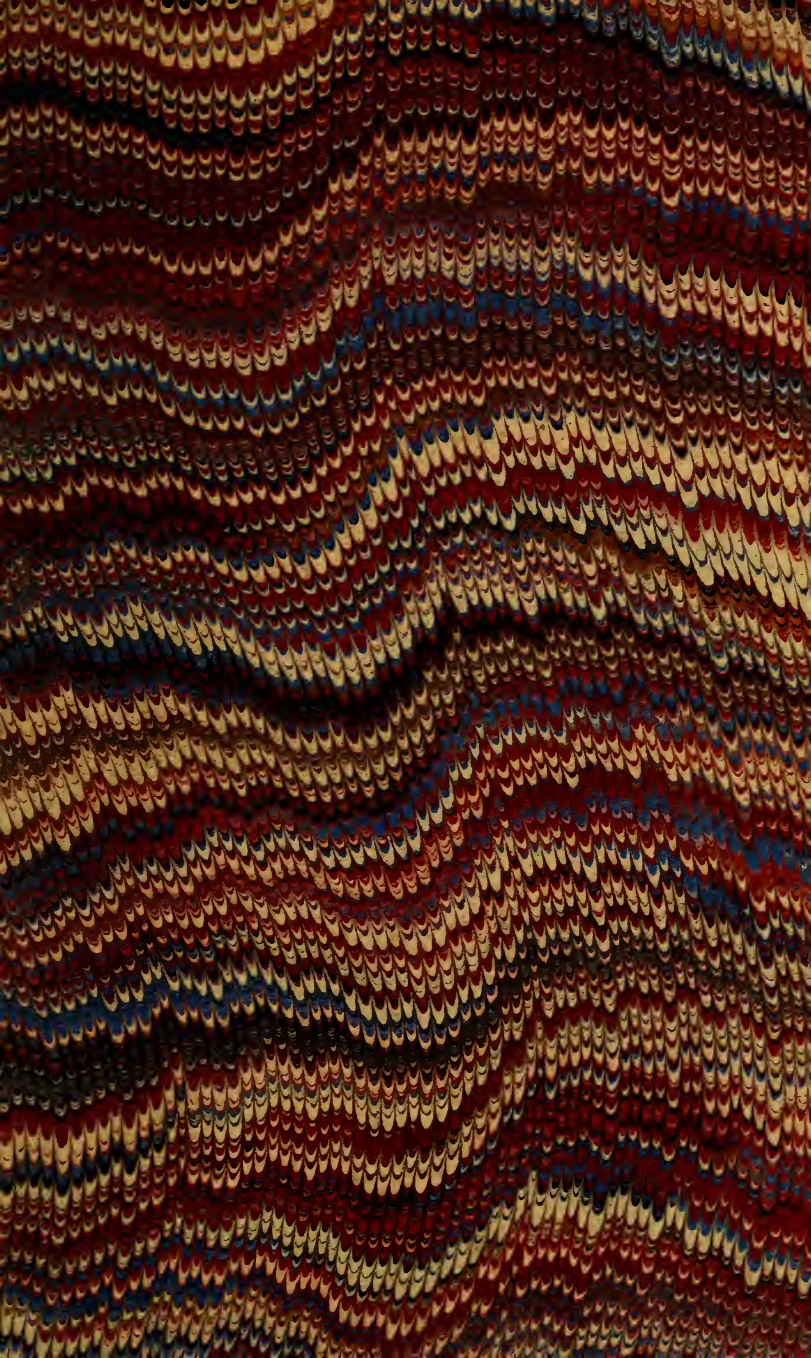


823
T19c
v.1



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
T19c
v.1



3 vols
157
10/2

7





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

CYRILLA.

A TALE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE INITIALS."

"Many also have perished, have erred, and sinned, for women."

ESDRAS, iv, 27.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,

Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

1853.

Printed by Oliver and Boyd,
Tweeddale Court, High Street, Edinburgh.

823

T19c

v.1

CYRILLA.

CHAPTER I.

Taylor
H. Taylor. 34.
 HUNDREDS of English travellers pass through Salzburg every summer—many of them having previously gone over a considerable portion of this earth's periphery in that silent business-like manner which, on the continent of Europe, is supposed to be peculiar to their nation; not a few, after having arrived at the melancholy conviction, that they have already seen too much to be surprised or particularly pleased by any country left for them to explore. Yet the feelings must be blunted in an unusual degree, if that most beautifully situated town make no lasting impression on the mind, when seen in all the glory of an unclouded summer's day. The range of mountains that form the horizon, and from which the snow seldom altogether disappears, is near enough to realize in a few hours the dreams of the most imaginative pedestrian, in

50051

gigantic rocks, thundering torrents, dark lakes, and narrow secluded valleys. Mountains, too, are the natural fortifications of the town itself, the solid rock forming a part in the construction of many of the houses, while forest trees grow luxuriantly among the crags above their roofs.

Salzburg in summer, and Salzburg in winter, present, however, very different aspects. The surrounding scenery is unfit for enjoyment; we perceive that the streets are narrow, the houses high, that the mountains diminish the hours of light and sunshine, and seem in their monotonous whiteness like shrouded giants about to encircle us in their frozen arms. The beautiful marble fountain in the Dom Platz is covered up with wooden planks to defend it from the frost; the exotic plants that luxuriated at all the windows have been withdrawn; deep snow lies on the ground, not, however, wet and slippery as we know it in England, but dry, hard, crisp, and crystallized; and a stranger might watch with interest the various kinds of sledges, from those on which the loaded waggon slides gratingly, its team of horses well furnished with sonorous bells, to the lighter vehicles that, gliding noiselessly along, convey the fruit and vegetables to market, the fur-capped children to school, or the capacious basket of a laundress to its destination.

The mixture of monks and military is also a peculiarity that strikes immediately. With the

former we have nothing to do, with the latter somewhat—that is, if the reader will consent to retrograde some twenty years in imagination, and spend a winter day in Salzburg towards the end of the year 1830. Crossing the bridge over the Salzach at an early hour in the morning, a turn to the left will lead into a narrow street not far distant from the palace of Mirabel, containing several large massively built houses: over the gateway of one of them a well-known coat of arms hewn in stone is conspicuous, the coronet and savage upon it being, it is true, rather weather-beaten and in some places defective, but, like the tattered colours of a regiment that has seen service, the increase of these defects only serve to add to its value in the estimation of its possessors.

This house was built by Rudolph Baron von Walden auf Waldenburg in the seventeenth century, and since repaired, altered, and enlarged, by his successors at different periods; which interesting facts were recorded on stones inserted in the walls, that no subsequent yellow, green, or whitewashing of the mansion had ever been suffered to conceal or deface. It was asserted, with every appearance of probability, that the buildings used as stables had been erected by the Romans, and that perhaps treasure, certainly antiquities, might be found, if judicious and determined search were made in the yard and its vicinity.

The Waldens had been an incredulous generation with respect to hidden treasures, and cared for no antiquities, excepting those that immediately concerned their family. It was curious that the first who, roused by curiosity or avarice, had rummaged the family archives for information on the subject, should be deprived in a rather arbitrary manner of his inheritance. Unconscious of the value attached to the house by his only son, Baron Walden had bestowed it on his daughter Olga, as an additional gift the day she had prudently married her cousin, Gottfried von Adlerkron Windhorst, instead of a penniless soldier of fortune to whom she had long been attached. When afterwards, surprised and dismayed at the boundless wrath of his son, Baron Walden would willingly have re-purchased his gift at almost any price, nothing could induce Olga to resign a house which, even on her wedding-day, she calmly thought would make a desirable widow-residence for herself hereafter; a house in which the stones spoke more distinctly of the noble race of Walden, than even the excavated tunnel-entrance to the town of its pious architect. A quarrel had naturally ensued between the brother and sister, followed by such intense hatred on the part of the former, that years afterwards, on his deathbed at Waldenburg, he had complained of his unjust disinheritance with all the bitterness of a freshly received injury, rejoiced that his sister was childless, and

then enjoined his young son Conrad to purchase the house of his aunt, if she could ever by any means be induced to part with it.

In the meantime, the Baroness, as she had anticipated, became a widow, and in the course of time took up her abode in the "Walden Haus," as it was called. The faint formal epistolary effort made by her brother's son after his father's decease to commence a correspondence, had proved quite fruitless; she informed him, in a few cold unsympathizing lines, that, "having received the intelligence of her brother's death, she would not refer to the terms on which they had lived, but considered it her duty to inform him now, if he were not already aware of the circumstance, that she had adopted her nephew, Rupert von Adlerkron, and intended to make him, in accordance with the wishes of her late husband, heir to all she possessed." The tone or purport of the letter, perhaps both, prevented any further attempt at conciliation or communication, and the Baroness turned with renewed interest towards Rupert, the last scion of the house of Adlerkron.

As the son of her husband's eldest brother and her own sister, he was doubly her nephew, also, in consequence of former intermarriages in their families, her cousin; to this mixture of relationships she had often alluded, but latterly they had all been sunk in the name of adopted son, and she had for

many years made it her chief occupation to amass wealth, hoping with it to purchase that affection and devotion from him, which she had failed to secure by less expensive means at an earlier period. Some other relations had lately begun to occupy her thoughts; they were the children of her husband's youngest brother Carl; but their having been already left a considerable sum of money by her husband, and a bequest of as much more should they marry with her consent, had hitherto caused her to regard them with an undisguised anger and dislike, that nothing but a feeling of daily increasing loneliness could overcome. To this was now added a matrimonial plan for one of them, which had suddenly but completely taken possession of her mind; and this plan with its consequences influenced in so remarkable a manner the whole family, that the Baroness, as the projector of it, must be considered worthy of more attention than so little interesting a person would otherwise deserve, or than perhaps will be quite agreeable to the reader.

Let us mount the time-worn stone staircase on the morning our tale commences, and on the first floor we shall meet her walking towards the small room in which she generally breakfasted. There was an air of stern yet faded grandeur about the interior of the residence, which accorded well with the appearance of the mistress of it; her very dress

of *fueillemorte* coloured silk seemed to be of the same date as the sun-bleached red curtains of the ante-room. Such was not however the case: an experienced female eye would have pronounced the scanty morning wrapper to be at least of this century, whereas the furniture and its arrangement but too evidently bore the stamp of a foregoing—not the gorgeous rococo or renaissance, but the stiff insipid style of the Revolution, with all its inelegant angles and so-called antique forms. The effect produced by this furniture in the massive antiquated building was not unlike that of the Baroness' own dress, as it clung to her full figure, which, not above the middle height, inclined very considerably to a degree of fleshiness that might almost be termed corpulency; the smallness of both hands and feet denoted that the proportions had once been finer, and more appropriate to the very handsome face which had successfully braved the wear and tear of an execrable temper and nine-and-forty years. Her dark brow contracted, and an expression of vehement impatience burst from her lips, as, through the negligently closed door of the stove, the bright flames of an unusually large fire met her eyes. She stooped, was for a moment lost in the capacious mouth of the stove, and having then and there ascertained that more wood was being burned than was permitted, she called angrily to a footman evidently attempting an escape, and asked in a very

loud voice, who had dared to waste her wood in that extravagant manner.

“ I don’t know, madam, but I will ask Ursula,” he replied, turning towards a housemaid, who at no great distance was busy at her usual morning work of deluging the uncarpeted corridors, and mopping them dry again, very much in the manner in which the decks of a man-of-war are swabbed. She allowed him to repeat the question of which she had heard every word, and then answered saucily, “ Baron Adlerkron desired me to make a good fire; he says he is frozen in this house—that he has never been warm since he came into it.”

The Baroness did not wait to hear the softened repetition of these words, but hastily entered the room, and saw the person who had caused the unnecessary waste of fuel drawing the breakfast-table to the two arm-chairs which he had already placed close to the stove. He was a very tall young man, with fair hair curling thickly round a high white forehead, large light blue eyes, a well proportioned nose, and a mouth half concealed by mustachios of unusual length, and hair still fairer than the “ Hyperian curls ” that graced his head. He had probably heard what had been said, for he half laughed, as he looked up for a moment to say “ Good morning, aunt,” and then again seized the table, unheeding of the clattering cups and tall tottering coffeepot, and continued to drag it towards him.

His aunt laid her hand on his arm, exclaiming, "Not so close to the stove, Rupert, pray—I shall be suffocated!"

He stopped, drew forward a screen, and then, having ensconced himself in a chair, began to eat his breakfast in silence.

"I wish," began his aunt after a pause—"I wish you would consent to remain here one day longer—only one day! Your cousins *must* arrive this evening; I cannot conceive what has delayed them so long."

"It is not difficult to account for the delay," he answered carelessly; "a journey from Italy is not easily made in such weather as this!"

"But they left Italy six weeks ago, and have been staying in Meran; a most unnecessary expense, I must say, for people in their circumstances."

"I thought you said my aunt Sophy had been ill?"

"Oh, not more than she always is—one might almost think that her former mode of life, wandering about after your uncle's regiment, must have been beneficial to her health, notwithstanding all the discomforts to which it subjected her; for since he died, and she has been able to live quietly, she has never been well."

"Perhaps grief".....began Rupert.

"Ah, bah!—she did not care for him most probably more than I did for your uncle Gottfried,—

perhaps not as much ; yet you see how I have got over *his* death, which is even more recent."

Rupert leaned back in his chair, folded his arms, and looked up to the ceiling. "While," she continued, "I don't mean to say that they lived unhappily together, they got on as well as the generality of people, I believe ; but you know he had been desperately wounded several times before she married him, and from the time his jaw was shattered, he was perfectly hideous ; besides, she was his second wife, and was such a contrast to the first, that I don't imagine he could have cared much for her, at least we all supposed so. It was your uncle Gottfried and I who arranged the marriage, you know."

"My uncle Gottfried !" said Rupert, with evident surprise ; "I should have thought that money-making was more in his line than match-making."

"Why, yes ; but we were so afraid that Carl would again make a fool of himself, that we were glad to find any one at all eligible disposed to take him. Your aunt Sophy's fortune was small, but the connexion was very desirable, and crippled as he was, after so many campaigns, he had no right to expect either youth or beauty."

"So brave a soldier had a right to expect much," observed Rupert.

"Well, I don't deny his bravery ; but he had faults of the most unpardonable description—he

was careless—thoughtless to a degree where money was concerned. You don't know how often your uncle Gottfried had to assist him!"

Rupert knew more about the matter than she did; but he did not say so.

"It was the only thing we ever seriously quarrelled about, for I always thought and said, that when people incurred debts they should pay them."

Still Rupert was silent, and she continued, "You have no idea what wild habits your uncle Carl contracted during the war; he quite forgot his station in life, and from the time he married that painter's daughter, *Signora* Nina, as they called her, he lived almost exclusively among artists, and actors, and authors, and such people."

"He led a very jolly life for several years," said Rupert. "Every one says his wife was an angel, and with such a child as Melanie must have been"

"Melanie would have been totally spoiled if her mother had not died," cried his aunt pettishly. "Fortunately your uncle Carl attended to our advice, and sent her off to school before he married again. The other two girls have been brought up very differently."

"I know they have," said Rupert, laughing; "my aunt Sophy's drawing-room was a perfect school-room. I have a painful recollection of seeing my little cousin Cyrilla perched on a high stool before

a pianoforte, playing some dreadful exercises for the left hand, while the tears streamed over her baby face, and she occasionally wiped them away with her long fair curls."

"So you remember Cyrilla?" cried his aunt quickly.

"As much as a mere boy can remember a mere child; I recollect her shoes particularly well."

"Her shoes!"

"Yes, she used to wear little bronze-coloured shoes, with pink sandals; and once, after she had performed some graceful sort of pantomime with a scarf, I saw her father place her on a table before him and kiss them. I thought at the time I should like vastly to have just such a little child of my own, bronze-coloured shoes and pink sandals inclusive."

"Nonsense, Rupert! You could not have been more than ten or twelve years old at that time."

"And yet I perfectly recollect indulging most innocently in the wish to be a father," said Rupert, holding a newspaper before his face to conceal a smile.

His aunt half laughed, fidgeted on her chair, played with her coffeespoon, and seemed to hesitate and consider what she should next say. At this moment the sound of an approaching sledge became audible, and no sooner did the jingling of the bells denote its immediate vicinity, than Ru-

pert sprang up, and throwing wide open the double windows, gave entrance to the cold winter air, and a considerable quantity of snow, while making exaggerated salutations to some one below.

“At last!” exclaimed the Baroness, rising hastily; “at last! Well, I really am glad that they have come before you leave Salzburg, for I must tell you.....”

What she intended to tell her nephew was inaudible, for the moment she had risen from her chair, with a little more than usual precipitation, four dogs, remarkable for nothing but their diminutive dimensions, commenced snarling and barking with all their might. Totally inattentive to her commands for silence, they first endeavoured to impede her progress across the room, by running over her feet, and then seizing Rupert's fur-lined dressing-gown, which hung temptingly before them as he leaned out of the window, they tugged at it so successfully that in a few seconds it was torn in several places.

“I don't hear what you say!” cried Rupert to some one in the street. “Confound these useless curs,” he added, impatiently kicking those nearest him, “it is impossible to hear a word when they are yelping in this way. Where are you to be found?”

“At the barracks. We are going to make a sledg-

ing party into Bavaria to-day, to drink Rhine wine—did not Polyak tell you?”

“I did not see him.....”

“I thought he was the best person to give the message to you, as we all know that he is every day and all day.....”

Rupert threw back his head and eyes with a significant jerk, the speaker made an odd grimace, and calling out, “I shall expect you in an hour,” drove off.

“I wish you would shut the window, Rupert,” said his aunt pettishly; “it is very cold. I really thought, from your impetuous manner, that it must have been your cousins you expected to see, and it is only that stupid Count Glaneck.”

“An excellent, kind-hearted fellow as ever lived.”

“That is more than I can say for you,—you have kicked Amor and Mi-lady unmercifully.”

“I did not mean to hurt them, though they provoked me beyond endurance. Come here, Mi-lady. You do not seem to have suffered much from my boot. Affectionate creature! She has turned up her little red eyes to my face—she forgives me. May I not hope that my aunt will also pardon my impatience, or cruelty, or whatever the misdemeanour may be denominated, of which I have been guilty?”

"I think," said his aunt, not quite satisfied at his attempt at contrition, "I think, Rupert, you must purposely try to annoy me. I know you are fond of dogs—all sportsmen are; and yet mine are abused and kicked by you on every possible occasion."

"If they did not bark just when I happen to be speaking, or when other people are speaking, I have no sort of dislike to them, though they *are* useless little brutes."

"Usless little brutes!"

"Why, yes. I don't suppose Mi-lady ever killed a rat in her life; Amor would run away from a mouse; and Jolie and Minkerl are of such doubtful breed, that one hardly knows what they are intended to represent."

"Minkerl is a Russian terrier; his father was Russian and his mother was Russian, and Colonel Bockenheim says he envies me but one thing in the world, and that is—Minkerl."

"Don't believe him. He envies you your thousands and tens of thousands of Austrian florins and Prussian dollars much more! I suspect, too, he intends you to bestow a few of them on his very pretty daughter, or he would never have proposed giving her to you for a companion."

"That was not exactly his intention, but you are not very far from the mark."

"And, pray, what *was* his intention?" asked

Rupert carelessly, while he amused himself placing bits of sugar on the dogs' noses, which they were not to eat until he had given the word of command. "What *was* his intention?—Steady, Amor! make ready—present—halt—present....."

"He knows the large fortune of which you are in actual possession, as well as that, having quarrelled with my brother, you, and you alone, are likely to be my heir. He thought that as you are unmarried, and his daughter as you say very pretty, there was a chance of....."

"Fire!" cried Rupert, and the dogs crunched their sugar while he hastily rose, and with a gesture of impatience prepared to leave the room.

"You always avoid this subject, Rupert, though you know very well how much I wish you to leave the army, and....."

"I know very well how much you wished me to enter it a few years ago."

"Yes, when you wanted to travel in the East; but now that you are older and steadier, I wish you to marry and settle at Windhorst. Colonel Bockenheim says you would be more manageable if you had a few debts, and I believe he is right; not that I exactly wish you to have pecuniary embarrassments like other young men....."

"Thank you, aunt, but I have none whatever; and as to marrying Colonel Bockenheim's daughter....."

“*His* daughter!” exclaimed the Baroness haughtily; “no, indeed, I never thought of such a connexion! We can easily find some one more suitable.”

“Yes, yes, we can easily find some one more suitable,” repeated Rupert, while he hurried towards the door. “Time enough, time enough. I give you the next ten years to look out for a wife for me. No man should ever marry until he is past thirty.”

“Generally speaking, perhaps, you are right; but in your case it is otherwise. You are the last of the Adlerkron Windhorsts; and know, that should you die without having children, estates that have been in our family for hundreds of years fall to the crown. Windhorst you know.....”

“I know, I know,” cried Rupert; “but your other nephew, Walden of Waldenburg, is precisely in the same position. Why don’t you bestow some care on the preservation of your own immediate family? Conrad must be a well-grown lad by this time. What’s his age?”

“Don’t name him to me!” she exclaimed angrily. “The son of a brother I disliked so much, and who did not scruple to injure my reputation in every way that lay in his power, shall never inherit anything from me. All my hopes and expectations are centred in you.”

“I’m very sorry to hear it,” said Rupert, with

an impatient sigh, "and wish that I had a brother or any thing that would save me from proposals of marriage, and prevent so many people from interesting themselves in my concerns."

"I hope you have no objection to my expressing some interest about you, Rupert?"

"O, of course not."

"Well then, I wish to speak a few words to you about something really of importance, and deeply interesting to us both."

"I am afraid Glaneck expects me,—if you would only postpone your communication until I return....."

"But you intend to spend the whole day with him: I heard you say so!" cried his aunt with visible irritation. "You never bestow five minutes' attention on me, however," she added with affected resignation; "you learned to treat me with indifference and disrespect from your uncle, and I ought never to have submitted to it from either of you."

Rupert had heard this so often that he either no longer doubted the fact, or deemed it unnecessary to attempt a contradiction, and merely replied while his hand was on the lock of the door: "I intended to have remained out late, but if you desire it I shall endeavour to get back in time to talk to you before you go to bed. Early to-morrow morning I must start for the north; the remainder of my leave of absence ought to be spent at Windhorst: they

tell me the roof wants repair again ; I wish half the castle would fall to the ground—the other half would be more than large enough for me ! ”

“ Rupert ! ”

“ You need not look so shocked ; there’s no harm in a man’s wishing his ancestors had been more economical in stone and mortar. I never go to Windhorst without thinking what a famous cavalry barrack it would make ! ”

“ Oh, Rupert ! if your uncle were alive, and could hear you talk in this way, after all the improvements he made there during your minority ! ”

“ I did occasionally hint something of the kind to him ; for even his presence could not make it other than a magnificently dull place. I am thinking of buying a very pretty hunting-lodge near Exfort as soon as I find we are likely to be quartered there ; but I can tell you all about that in the evening. You may expect me at nine or ten o’clock. Are you satisfied ? May I go ? ”

His aunt did not look satisfied, but she nodded her head, and Rupert, uttering a hasty *au revoir*, left the room.

CHAPTER II.

SOON after her nephew left her, the Baroness, muffling herself in a fur-lined cloak, and accompanied by her housekeeper, descended the stairs to inspect the rooms prepared for the reception of her sister-in-law and her two daughters. Under pretence of a wish to be useful and kind to relatives in not very brilliant circumstances, and altogether forgetting to mention that her wealth had not been able to procure her one friend, or even a companion whose presence she could tolerate, she had offered them the use of some apartments on the ground-floor of her house, after having found it impossible to induce any tenant to remain more than a few months in them. It is probable her sister-in-law would have declined the permission to occupy them, had not the letter containing the proposal hinted something conciliatory about a "certain important paragraph in her husband's will," and a "hope that her house would henceforward be a home for her sister-in-law and her daughters."

Unwilling to decline the first advance towards friendship on the part of their rich relation, they had not ventured to refuse, and they quitted Italy with heavy hearts ; and from Meran they wrote to request the Baroness to purchase whatever furniture was absolutely necessary in the first instance, but to avoid any expense beyond their means. Nothing could be more comfortless than the appearance of the large low rooms with their half-dozen chairs, hard cushionless sofas, and scanty white curtains. The Baroness Adlerkron, however, seemed to think it quite good enough for the expected occupants, and even found some of the bedroom furniture unnecessarily costly.

“ Painted chests of drawers and wardrobes would have answered the purpose quite as well, Monica,” she observed to the housekeeper, who stood shivering beside her, “ painted in imitation of cherry-wood or walnut, you know. This is an unnecessary expense—don’t forget to collect all the bills, that my sister-in-law may see exactly the price of everything.”

The woman sneered slightly, and murmured something about stoves requiring to be heated, as there had been no fires since the whitewashing.

“ The time of their arrival is too uncertain,” replied the Baroness coldly ; “ but you had better bespeak wood for them—not, however, from the peasant who supplies me ; I wish as much as pos-

sible to avoid employing the same tradespeople." She drew her cloak tighter round her, and walked up stairs.

After looking over her house-accounts, and scolding a good deal about the extravagance practised, without exception, by every member of her establishment, she summoned her maid and changed her dress. The morning wrapper was thrown aside, and a silk dress, evincing an economical inclination to follow the latest fashion without a too great expenditure of stuff, was substituted; an indescribable fantastic head-dress, supposed to be Hungarian, composed of bright-coloured velvet ribbons, partly concealed her dark hair, which was but slightly tinged with grey; and while she amused herself clasping bracelets on her wrists, her maid kneeling before her tied the sandals of a pair of diminutive silk shoes the colour of her robe. With satisfaction she glanced at both feet and hands, and then a little less confidently at her full length image in the glass. It was the reflection of a woman past her prime, but not yet faded: the marked and regular features were still so handsome, that, as she gazed, a smile of proud approbation stole over them—a row of teeth of faultless purity became visible, and she turned away, calling her dogs around her, as she held out her hand impatiently for her handkerchief.

The maid, in presenting it, said diffidently, "Martin wishes to know if the sledge will be....."

“Martin may wait for my orders,” said the Baroness, haughtily interrupting her.

“His daughter was so very ill last night, that.....”

“I know nothing of his daughter—I have never heard of his having a wife,” said the Baroness, frowning; and then, shaking her handkerchief in the air, which was a signal for her dogs to make violent springs to catch it, she walked on to the drawing-room, followed by all four barking and snarling around her.

The house seemed to have increased in gloominess even since the morning—no ray of winter sun now lightened its vaulted corridors—no sound more cheerful than the barking of small dogs enlivened them. Situated in that part of the town which lost its brilliancy and fashion when the Crown Prince of Bavaria ceased to inhabit the closely approximate palace of Mirabel, it had, with the exception of the *bel étage*, been let to a numerous but quiet family of the name of Bornstedt. They were respectable, and paid their rent regularly; and the Baroness, in a condescending sort of way, informed them, through her porter, that they might continue to do so, even after she had taken possession of her own apartments. She explained at some length to her *avocat*, that “having a family of that description in the house was rather desirable than otherwise for a widow—it would prevent

attempts at robbery or anything of that kind ; but as they did not live in her ' world,' any idea of social intercourse was of course quite out of the question. They were very good sort of people, and she hoped they would have sense enough to understand their position."

She took care that they should learn it soon enough ; for when chance, in any place, brought them together, though she graciously returned the bows and curtsies of the whole family with an inclination of her head, her lips refused to move or even part for a moment, lest such condescension on her part should provoke familiarity and draw her into a sort of acquaintance. Haughtily had she ordered her servant to refuse them admission, when, after she had been established in her house about ten days, they, in the excess of their civility, came to pay what they considered a visit of imperative politeness ; and this she had done after having been informed by her maid (for servants *will* talk to each other) that the Bornstedts were only waiting for their spring bonnets, and that Miss Josephine, or as she was familiarly called Miss Pepi, had got a new muslin frock for the occasion.

With deliberate cruelty, too, she had watched until one fine *fête* day—when the said spring bonnets and new frock had left the house to grace and enliven with their presence one of the numerous gardens in the neighbourhood—to return the visit.

As the happy family-party, joyous and a little noisy, sauntered down the street, she put on her bonnet and shawl, and with a card on which was engraved "La Baronne d'Adlerkron Windhorst née Baronne de' Walden Waldenburg" in her hand, she desired a footman to ring the bell on the second floor. Following just enough to make herself visible in the distance to the maid who opened the door, she turned down a corner of the card to denote that she had been there in person, and then again descended the stairs.

One last faint effort was made by the Bornstedts to be "neighbourly," as they termed it. A short time afterwards, when they met her entering the house, they endeavoured with considerable volubility to express their regret at not having been at home when she "had done them the honour to call." She bowed her head haughtily two or three times, and then continued her conversation with a young officer who stood beside her, quite unheeding of their abashed countenances as they drew aside to let her and her companion pass them. This young man was known by the name of the Adlerkron *aid-de-camp*. He had brought a letter of introduction to her—had been invited to her house, and some way or other had got a habit of going there every day. Nor had he been singular either in this name or in his habits; each following regiment had furnished a successor, sometimes older, some-

times uglier, never younger, until the time our tale commences: but if we follow the Baroness into her drawing-room now, it will puzzle us to find out what can induce so very young a man as Count Ivan Polyak to spend every hour, not claimed by actual duties, in that large cold room. Perhaps he wished to have a lounge in one of the first houses in the town—perhaps he was an admirer of the still handsome Baroness—perhaps he liked people to talk about him: these reasons, and some others of a less creditable description, were commonly assigned him by the Salzburg world, which proves that the world there can be as unnecessarily censorious as elsewhere. The fact was, he had only just joined his regiment—had been educated at home in the heart of Hungary. Half proud, half shy, and not particularly clever, he had not learned to feel at ease among his comrades excepting when he was on horseback; while with the Baroness he could talk of his father, mother, brothers, sisters, and tutor, without reserve: besides she was a correct and unwearying accompanier on the piano-forte, and he sang a little and played the flute in a melancholy gentlemanlike sort of way. Though not an amusing, the Baroness was a loquacious woman—was accustomed to have some one to listen to and answer her appropriately; and during both her married and widowed life she had always had a tame man of some kind or other about her,

so that such a person had become at last absolutely indispensable. The French have their *cavalier servant*—the Italians their *cicisbéo*—the Germans their *hausfreund*. The English vocabulary (on this occasion one may rejoice in the poverty of the language) fails to furnish a word, so we must be satisfied with the Salzburg military denomination, and say that *the* aid-de-camp was a small slight young man, with coal-black hair and eyes, a sallow complexion, turned-up nose, and slightly projecting chin; his tightly-fitting hussar uniform was worn with such ease, that it seemed what it nearly was, rather a national costume than a military dress.

He sprang across the room to meet her as she entered, and then commenced some noisy play with the dogs until she had established herself on the sofa, and drawn an elaborately inlaid spindle-legged work-table towards her, from the silk pouch of which she drew forth a huge piece of tapestry. Then he sat down beside her, and while the dogs endeavoured to tempt him to continue their boisterous sport by scratching and whining at his boots or springing on his knee, he unceremoniously pushed them down with one hand, while, leaning forward, he with the other endeavoured to construct various incongruous edifices by heaping together the different implements of female industry, bonbonnières,

vinaigrettes, flacons, and all the other miscellanies usually collected on such tables.

"I scarcely expected to see you to-day," she said, taking a pair of scissors out of his hand. "How did you happen not to join the sledging party into Bavaria?"

"I feared they would make me drink too much of that sour Rhine wine, which I cannot learn to like; so I refused to go with them. I suppose it is bad taste on my part; but I think our wines better."

"Tokay against johannesberg," said the Baroness.

"Exactly. By the by, I regret to say that you must wait until spring for the tokay I promised you: we have no roads passable at present, so the wine must come with my horses—I am sorry for the delay."

"It is of no consequence. But what do you intend to do with more horses? you told me yesterday you intended to sell your greys."

"Very true; but—you see—I often want money, and am continually obliged to apply to my father: to do him justice he has been liberal enough—but I am a bad manager, and he has now informed me that he can send me no more—but a.....as many horses and as much brandy as I choose."

"Brandy!"

"Yes ; we have distilleries on our estates—most people in our neighbourhood have."

"I suppose," said the Baroness, "as the Bavarians have breweries?"

"Very likely ; I don't know anything about Bavaria as yet, excepting that the beer is good."

"Well—but—about the brandy?"

"Brandy he offered me, and corn too, but they were not in my line, so I chose the horses."

"And how many do you expect?"

"I don't know ; a good lot at all events, for we have everything on a grand scale at home."

"I wonder your father does not sell his corn and brandy."

"We are so quite out of the way of roads and markets, our brandy is sold to the people about us, and the produce forms the greater part of our income. As to the rest, we have everything we want for the plentiful keeping of a house, with servants and horses unnumbered."

"But when you went to Pesth"

"Oh my mother and sisters always quartered themselves on our relations ; my father never moved, he was bored enough by their coming back with all sorts of new dresses and ideas."

"New ideas ! of what kind?"

"Why, the last was, that we must invite all the officers quartered within ten or twelve miles of

us to our house, and from that time they never were out of it: my eldest sister married one of them, an Austrian, and we thought it a famous thing at first."

"And not at last?"

"Why, not exactly. When I visited her in Vienna, on my way here, she was living in a queer out of the way lodging, and could only afford to keep one pair of the horses my father had given her; then, she and her husband went to every one's house who asked them, and never gave anything at all themselves. I thought the concern shabby, and told Ilka my opinion plainly enough."

"I daresay she told you hers in return."

"She said I was a foolish boy, and did not know how people lived in civilized countries!"

"A most slighting speech," said the Baroness, smiling; "unpardonable, if it had not been made by a relation and countrywoman."

"Oh in her heart she is as much a Magyar as I am; nevertheless, we had a desperate battle, in which I should have been victorious if her husband had not come to her assistance. It is only lately, however, that I have begun to find out what he meant by people in civilized countries living on money, and not on the raw produce of the land. When at home, I had everything I wanted, and never knew

how it was procured—now, I am obliged to pay for every glass of wine I drink.”

“You don’t find your present state of independence so agreeable as you expected, perhaps?”

“Not quite; and, if living on money be, as my brother-in-law says, a stride towards civilisation, I wonder what he would call living, as I do now, on nothing at all?”

“That is the excess of civilisation,” said the Baroness, laughing, “and can only take place for any length of time in highly civilized cities!”

“Indeed! But even in highly civilized cities, if one happen to have a brute of a banker.....”

“Hush,” cried the Baroness, playfully; “I have a great respect for bankers—all reputable people have; there are few better trades, and in time of war or rumours of war, like the present.....”

“Oh, if there were a war, I should have very little to do with the bankers—I could forage for myself then.”

“Of course you would; but while we are waiting for the commencement of hostilities, suppose we drive out in the sledge?”

It was ordered, and her maid appeared with muffling in every possible form, and a bonnet with long waving feathers. Now the sledge, with its costly furs, silver bells, tassels, and plumed horses, was by many degrees the handsomest in Salzburg:

the occupants, therefore, were more pleased than surprised to perceive that people stopped to look at or after them as they dashed along the streets and over the bridge. They saw not the nods, the shrugs, the scornful smiles, or vulgar winks that pursued them ; with undisguised satisfaction and unerring hand Polyak guided the impatient snorting horses and fragile vehicle over the frozen snow, more pleased, however, than his companion, when they were overtaken on the *Walser Felder* by the military sledging party to Bavaria. It seemed as if all the officers of the garrison had turned out, and each as he passed saluted with grave mien and laughing eyes, Rupert not excepted, even while he called out " Ten o'clock at latest ! "

On their return, as Polyak was about to take leave, the Baroness asked him to share her dinner. Without a moment's hesitation he accepted the invitation ; and it was very evident that he felt himself quite at home when soon after seated opposite her, at a little table, in a little room, with a very little dinner before him.

CHAPTER III.

As the hour appointed by Rupert drew near, the Baroness became fidgety, cross, and hungry, and the moment the clock struck ten she rang the bell violently and ordered supper. She had time to eat it, and might have sat quietly ruminating afterwards, as is so strongly recommended by physicians in general, had not restlessness instead of quietude been her habit, which, as it proceeded from the neglected cultivation of an active mind, and total want of real occupation of any description, was a torment to every one about or depending on her. The servants, even those who had stolen off to bed, were now put in requisition. One was sent with a note to Count Polyak to ask if the sledging party had not yet returned; others were to make inquiries of the sentinels at the two entrances of the town from the Bavarian side; others again to watch at open windows, to give notice of the sound of approaching sledges; while she herself walked up

and down the room, not suffering uneasiness, but yielding unreservedly to impatience and ill-temper.

It was in this ruffled state that she now awaited her nephew's return, and it was perhaps a fortunate circumstance that, when he arrived, his companions detained him long to say adieu, and make promises of beating up his quarters during the ensuing summer. At length they were gone, and Rupert bounded up the stairs, and presented himself to his aunt a perfect personification of good humour.

"Capital fellows the officers here!" he exclaimed: "Never met a jollier set!"

"*You* look as if you had been more than jolly," observed his aunt.

"Then my looks belie me," he answered, slightly shrugging his shoulders, and then stooping to play with the dogs, determined not to commence a conversation which he would rather have avoided.

"Have you supped?" she asked abruptly.

"Yes, thank you: hours ago."

"And a.....you had a gay party.....and Count Glaneck enjoyed it as much as any of you?"

Rupert stared; he knew his aunt did not care the least in the world for his friend, so he answered laughingly, that "Glaneck had been very cheerful, and he was sure would be extremely flattered if he heard of her kind inquiries about him."

"Hum.....It seems he has quite got over the loss of his wife!"

“Oh, no; he speaks of her constantly; and, from what he says, is not likely to find any one to supply her place.”

“And yet he must marry again, I suppose,” said the Baroness; “widowers generally do when they have children.”

“Perhaps he may,” said Rupert. “If I had known that you were curious on the subject, I should have asked him.”

“Pshaw,” cried his aunt impatiently; “he is a man I rather dislike than otherwise; but he has been an exemplary husband, they say, and may have recommended you to a..... Perhaps, however, it is better to speak plainly, and say at once what I mean.”

“I wish you would,” said Rupert; and perceiving that evasion was no longer possible, he added, “I have returned home early on purpose to hear all you have to say to me before I leave.”

“Must you then go to-morrow?”

“Yes.”

“And your aunt and cousins hourly expected!”

“I regret extremely not being able to renew my acquaintance with them, but I can no longer postpone my journey; and I should think that a few months sooner or later can be of very little importance to any of us.”

“I think differently, however. Do you remember your cousins?”

"Scarcely. I have not seen them for more than twelve years—not since the time of the Royal Congress at Aix, you know, when Melanie married Count Falkenstein."

"Yes; I remember we had to give them money to go there, as some one foolishly told your uncle Carl the baths might be of use to him. Physicians should never order baths for people who have not money to pay for them!"

"But they were of use to him," said Rupert. "He was quite cheerful and well afterwards."

"At all events he got Melanie off his hands before she had time to make a fool of herself," said his aunt; "but, to return to your cousins Fernanda and Cyrilla, you have not told me what impression they made on you."

"None whatever," replied Rupert laughing; "they were mere children, and did nothing but learn lessons and practise the pianoforte from morning till night. They must be dreadfully accomplished by this time, I should think! Melanie, however, made quite as deep an impression on me as you seem to desire. She certainly was, when she married Falkenstein, the most beautiful woman I ever saw. She is still very handsome, and still the most romantic, poetical....."

"She is an authoress," cried his aunt interrupting him—"an authoress; and I hate women who write books. I have no fancy for figuring in print,

and therefore will have nothing to do with her. She has never taken the least notice of me since her marriage; but I don't want her, nor does she want me in any way it seems, and so we are equal. Your other two cousins are, however, differently situated. I am afraid they will not be satisfied with the permission to occupy part of my house; they, or at least their mother, will expect me to do something for them....."

"But surely," said Rupert with a look of surprise, "surely you must have had some intentions of that kind when you proposed their coming here?"

"You seem to forget, Rupert, that you will be a loser in exact proportion to my generosity."

"There is no generosity in the case. Give them at once what my uncle bequeathed them."

"I shall do no such thing; they have got enough from me already—besides, he left it to them only in case they should marry with my consent!"

"Oh, there will be no difficulty on that score here, if you do not object to the military line. Let's see: there's Glaneck for one.....Ah, now I know why you inquired so particularly about him—Glaneck for one, and Polyak for the other! Pol is a capital little fellow—domestic habits, and all that sort of thing!" and Rupert laughed merrily, undisturbed by his aunt's frowning countenance.

"You talk as if I were a common matchmaker," she observed angrily.

"Most women," he said, still laughing, "have,

I believe, an inclination to provide for the domestic happiness of their unmarried friends ; and I have little doubt that you have already formed plans for both your nieces. Now, my advice to you is, that you refrain from using your authority on so very important an occasion : tell them that their uncle's legacy is theirs when they choose to claim it, and that you leave them at liberty to marry when and whom they please."

"You talk lightly of a large sum of money, Rupert ; however, this is the very subject on which I wished to speak to you."

"You surely did not think that I would attempt to dissuade you from such laudable intentions?" asked Rupert smiling.

"Wait until you hear my whole plan. You know your uncle's and my greatest wish has ever been that in the course of time you should repurchase Adlerkron, the place from which we take our name, and that your grandfather so foolishly sold in order to buy shares in those odious copper mines....."

"Which," said Rupert, "have turned out very well, and are a vast deal more profitable than Adlerkron."

"He would have sold Windhorst too if he had had the power," cried the Baroness indignantly.

"'Twas a pity he could not, as he then would have retained Adlerkron," said Rupert. "I am sorry that place has gone out of the family."

“Now you are talking rationally.—So you would like to have Adlerkron again?”

“Of course I should; but Polinsky asks a fancy price for it now.”

“And you have been negotiating with him about it?”

“Yes; but finding it quite beyond my means, I intend to employ my minority capital in another purchase.”

“No, no, Rupert; Adlerkron is not beyond your means if you will only do as I propose. I must endeavour to keep my fortune undivided for you, and at the same time do something for these girls. I cannot, therefore, think of a better plan than that you should marry one of them: Fernanda is too near your own age, but Cyrilla is scarcely eighteen, and when I saw her promised to be very pretty.”

Rupert had expected a proposal of marriage, and had already mentally refused all his female acquaintance; his cousins had never once occurred to him, and, though determined to decline the alliance, he was for a moment unprepared to answer, and his aunt continued with evident satisfaction: “You see, Rupert, the connexion is in every way desirable—your aunt too is such a—a—very worthy person, and has taken such enormous pains with the education of her daughters, that they must be everything a reasonable man could desire in a wife. I should have preferred letting things take a natural

course, and had you consented to await their arrival, it is very probable that you would have thought of this plan yourself; but, to be quite candid with you, I have another and stronger motive than I have yet ventured to tell you for urging this match."

Rupert looked up but did not speak, and she continued—

"Your determination to return to the north to-morrow has confirmed all my fears that you may at last be inveigled into a marriage with that half French girl—that artful Virginie de Lindesmar, who they say actually attempted to poison herself in a fit of desperation about you."

Rupert sprang from his seat, exclaiming angrily, "This is intolerable! How can you believe or repeat such nonsense, Madam?"

"Whatever you may say, Rupert, some foundation for this report there certainly was: her mother, who it was said at first joined and assisted her, grew frightened, and hushed up the affair as well as she could; but Virginie de Lindesmar most certainly attempted to poison herself one night after a ball, and it was supposed you intended to marry her from compassion, though every one agreed in saying that you had not committed yourself in any way. I have my correspondents, you see, and know more about you than you imagined."

"Any thing else, Madam?" asked Rupert with affected composure.

"Oh yes. One person who wrote to me on the subject added, that Virginie had confessed that she....."

"I beg your pardon for interrupting you, but when I assure you that I never thought of marrying her or.....or.....any one else, in all my life....."

"They say, however," persisted his aunt, "they say that a sort of conditional engagement exists between you."

"Then," answered Rupert, impatiently, "reports contradict each other in this instance, for *they say*, also, that she is about to be, or is actually, married to a Frenchman—a Vicomte de Rubigny, and she is in all probability by this time in Italy with him, as he is attached to some embassy there. On that subject at least let us avoid a dispute."

"I never knew any one so fond of mystery, or so tenacious of secrets as you are, Rupert. Any other would have told me the true state of *the* case at once, when they knew they might rely on my discretion."

"I really have nothing to tell. You know how very intimate I have always been with the Lindesmars. I played with Virginie when she was a child, and danced and sang with her when she became older. What could be more natural? If people choose to give us in marriage to each other, I cannot help it. Surely you have lived long

enough in the world to know that reports of that kind are often almost without foundation."

"Then the stories about her jealousy, and the laudanum, and her mother's intrigues, are not true, and she never went to your rooms disguised as a student.....or....."

"Heaven and earth!" cried Rupert, losing all patience, "this is too much! I have told you that she is married, or going to be married, and as she will never in any way be connected with our family, she cannot in the least interest you in future. If you have not anything of more consequence to discuss, I shall propose going to bed, as I start very early in the morning."

"Why, you have not given me any answer to my proposal about your cousin."

"My cousin? Cyrilla, I think, it was you said? I.....a.....consider the relationship too near."

"Nonsense, Rupert! The Adlerkrons and Waldens are cousins, and have gone on intermarrying for three successive generations!"

"I won't marry my cousin," said Rupert, folding his arms as he leaned against the stove with a look of great resolution; "I have no doubt that she is very pretty, and very accomplished, and all that a reasonable man could desire, as you so justly observed; but I am not sufficiently reasonable to take a wife on recommendation, and must and will choose for myself."

“Your wife will have no enviable lot!” cried his aunt, angrily; “for a more obstinate, passionate, disagreeable man does not exist than you have become during the last few years!”

“If such be your opinion of me,” said Rupert, with some irritation, “I cannot conceive how you could think of sacrificing your niece so barbarously.”

“My niece must marry whoever I please, and I shall not think it at all necessary to consult her inclinations on the subject: it will be very odd if I cannot control her at least! You consider yourself independent of me, and brave my authority without the slightest consideration; but there are limits even to *my* indulgence.....Do not try me too far, Rupert.....my affection for you is great, but it has bounds; and once for all I tell you, that if you do not consent to marry Cyrilla—I—I will—never forgive you—never speak to you again—and all connexion between us will end this night!”

“As you please, madam.”

“So you will not marry her?” asked his aunt, in a voice trembling with anger.

“No—no—certainly not.”

“Then,” she cried, rising from her chair and vehemently pushing aside everything with which she came in contact, “then, this must be our last interview. When your whole conduct is a system of opposition to my wishes, you cannot ex-

pect that I should still consider you as my son, or look upon you as my heir! To-morrow I shall make another will, and I feel myself exonerated from the necessity of even naming you in it."

"I might remind you of my uncle's intentions and wishes," cried Rupert, his eyes flashing and his face flushed; "and I might try to make you aware of the unreasonableness of your command, but—I am only too glad to escape my present thralldom on any terms; and pray keep in mind that you have yourself pronounced me free—discarded me. Gratitude for my uncle's kindness and care, not mercenary motives, has bound me to you hitherto. I beg in future that you will altogether forget my existence."

He strode out of the room as he pronounced the last word, leaving his aunt in a state of mixed astonishment and rage. No longer controlled by his presence, she paced the room with unequal steps, murmuring unintelligibly words of dire import. At the end of a quarter of an hour she became calmer, seated herself again, and, while she impatiently tapped the arms of her chair, began to think that she might perhaps have gone too far. Her threat (for it was nothing more) of disinheritance had been received in a manner that had completely confounded her: she regretted having been so premature with the disclosure of her plan, and saw plainly how injudiciously she had acted in los-

ing her temper when she ought to have been most temperate. The sound of horses entering the gateway made her start: she felt convinced that, late as it was, Rupert was about to leave her house—perhaps for ever. She rushed into the adjoining room, and rang without intermission the bell which denoted a summons for her maid, until she appeared.

“What noise is that on the stair?” she asked quickly.

“They are carrying down the carriage cases. I have already told them not to make so much noise,” she replied, quietly placing a chair before the toilet-table, and a pair of slippers beside it.

“How absurd to leave at such an hour! Go directly to Baron Adlerkron, and tell him I wish to speak to him again—there was something which I forgot to say to him. Tell him.....no.....go at once,” she cried, waving her hand impatiently.

“Perhaps,” she murmured, pressing her hands together, “perhaps he will refuse to come to me; and, for a girl about whom I am perfectly indifferent, I may have lost the only one of our family left me to care for, and whose position in the world could add dignity to mine! I ought to have made allowance for his warmth of temper, and after all I could not expect him to take a wife without having seen her!”

She listened anxiously as steps approached, and presently Rupert entered her room enveloped in furs, and evidently on the eve of departure.

After a struggle for composure, she began reproachfully, "I wonder, Rupert, you are not ashamed to give way to such violence of temper. You ought to endeavour to overcome these bursts of passion"

"I thought it was you who had been angry," he answered, with a good-humoured smile.

"Is it not anger that makes you set out on your journey at such an hour of the night?" she asked quickly.

"I like travelling at night; and besides, I feel that I have nothing more to do here, now that I am to be disinherited."

"Pooh, nonsense! I only said that when I was angry—I mean displeased—I never for a moment seriously thought of such a thing!"

"I do not know what you thought, but I heard what you said, and to prevent a renewal of the subject, I disclaim all expectations of any kind—the purport of your will I shall never inquire. Freedom of action is worth more than all you could bestow on me. I should act as I do now even if I were poor; how much more easily can I do so when your fortune, large as it is, is no object to me whatever.

"No object whatever!"

"None; for, much as I am habituated to wealth, there never was any one whose personal wants were so few, or whose tastes so simple as mine. I am independent in every sense of the word."

"And, to prove your independence, you will some day marry a woman without either fortune or connexion!"

"I have determined at all events not to marry Cyrilla: I feel a sort of incipient dislike to her, which will probably in time ripen into a respectable kind of hatred."

"Rupert, you would provoke a saint: it is impossible to know whether you are jesting or in earnest."

"Believe me, aunt, I have no inclination to jest about matrimony; every approach to the subject seems doomed to be a source of annoyance to me. I sometimes feel as if I were predestined to be unfortunate in my choice, or in my wife, though, to avoid it, I have resolved not to marry until I am desperately in love with some one in every way desirable."

"Oh, Rupert, nothing can be so desirable as what I have proposed; I cannot understand a *man* making objections, when everything can be arranged satisfactorily."

"Cannot you?" said Rupert, half laughing; "perhaps we are more inclined to make objections than women."

"But you have not so much at stake"

"Have n't we?" he said, looking impatiently towards the door.

"Well, well, I shall say no more about it; but before you go, you must promise to forget what I said to you just now."

"Do you mean about Cyrilla?"

"No, I mean about my will: if, however, you would remain until to-morrow"

"If I did, you know we should spend the time in useless arguments."

"Say at once, Rupert, that you do not intend to marry."

"I shall say no such thing. Cyrilla is perhaps the only person against whom I feel a decided antipathy."

"Obstinate boy!"

"Boy!" repeated Rupert, laughing; "well, be it so, but let me then hear no more about wives and marriage."

"And.....when may I expect to see you again?"

"Some time next summer.....per—haps."

"And in the meantime," said his aunt, "should I find Cyrilla.....I mean, in case I should wish to see you for a few days, will you not come to me?"

"Oh, of course, if it be possible; but understand me, I will *not* marry Cyrilla."

“May I at least depend on your consulting me before you decide on any one else?”

“I cannot promise that,” said Rupert; “to consult is half to ask advice, which one should not do without some intention of following it; but you shall hear time enough for us to quarrel about it a few weeks, at the end of which time

“You will do exactly what you please,” cried his aunt, interrupting him; “I see you are incorrigible.”

Rupert laughed, took leave, and hurried down the stairs into the cold night air with a light heart, and a determination that many months should elapse before he again would enter the house he was then leaving.

CHAPTER IV.

THE next day brought the travellers, who had been so anxiously expected. Had they arrived twenty-four hours sooner their reception would have perhaps been different; but the Baroness Adlerkron now felt more annoyance than interest as she stood at a window and saw, with a mixture of irritation and scorn, the heavily packed hired carriage, in which her relatives had made their journey, roll slowly under the archway into the house. She had been watching with Polyak the snow-storm that had prevented them from sledging, and served as an excuse for him to remain to dinner. As he now turned away and began hastily to drink off his coffee, naturally supposing it necessary to leave her, she observed carelessly, "You need not hurry; they will scarcely come up stairs for the next half-hour or more, and I don't feel the least inclination to go to them."

In the meantime, however, her servants ran un-

bidden down the stairs. Some assisted to unpack the carriage, while others opened the rooms and commenced lighting the fires.

"Pray, mamma, don't take off your cloak or you will be frozen," cried Fernanda springing towards her mother, and endeavouring to warm her hands by rubbing them in her own, which were equally cold and stiff.

They looked round the room and shivered.

"How gloomy! How wretched and inhospitable these rooms appear to me!" exclaimed Cyrilla with dismay. "Oh, what a change is this! These are vaults, not apartments!"

"Wait until they are warm and we have had time to make ourselves at home in them before you pass judgment," said her mother, glancing significantly towards her sister-in-law's servants. "You are much too hasty in forming your opinion of places and persons."

"I don't think I shall ever feel at home here, or ever be warm again," she rejoined heedlessly while she took off her bonnet, and pushed back a profusion of long fair ringlets, showing a bright joyous face in all the indefinite beauty of extreme youth; then suddenly observing that her mother looked very grave, she half-playfully, half-seriously knelt down on a footstool beside her, and taking one of her hands in both hers, silently watched the bringing in and partial unpacking of some military-

looking cases, on which time had nearly obliterated the letters and numbers that had for years ensured them a place on the baggage waggons of a very distinguished regiment. There was a quiet indifference to trifling discomforts in the manner of all three,—an absence of whatever was not absolutely necessary in the contents of these chests, that proved more plainly than words that the owners had travelled long and far. And in fact this had been the case in no common degree; for the Baroness Carl Adlerkron had never been induced to part with her daughters, either to send them to a school or to relations whose lives were more tranquil than her own. They had, therefore, with her followed their father during his lifetime, and afterwards a constant pursuit of health had made the south of France and Italy the scene of perpetual wanderings. Of the seclusion supposed to be necessary for the purpose of education they knew nothing; even as children both sisters had mixed in society,—it had become habit, second nature to them; and yet Cyrilla, with her unembarrassed manners and gradually acquired knowledge of social life, was as little worldly, and quite as innocent, as any blushing girl who has just returned to her family after having passed eight or ten years of her life in a *Pensionnat* or “Establishment,” with well jalousied windows, and high-walled grass garden, learning to speak French and work embroidery.

When their aunt's servants were gone, Fernanda began to assist the elderly grave-looking Swiss maid to unpack, while Cyrilla first walked and then danced round the room. "The furniture here," she said merrily, "will not damp our voices when we sing, or impede our movements when we dance."

"I must say," observed Fernanda laughing, "our aunt has followed somewhat too implicitly the directions to avoid expense: we must have another sofa directly, that mamma may be able to enjoy her afternoon sleep. I hope the stove is beginning to get warm."

Cyrilla went towards it,—not a particle of heat had as yet penetrated the antiquated mass of tiles which filled one entire corner of the room, reaching to the very ceiling. "No one would imagine," she said, placing her hands on the different parts where the warmth was most likely to penetrate,— "No one, I am sure, would imagine that that civil housemaid of my aunt's shoved half a tree into its gaping mouth!"

"I think," said Fernanda, "these rooms must have been intended for a porter who was to be allowed an unlimited quantity of wood; we shall be obliged to spend half our income buying fuel."

"My dear girls," said their mother, "you seem to forget that we have the apartments free of rent. Instead of abusing the stove, let us give it time

to warm the room, while we go to your aunt, who seems to expect us to seek our welcome."

They followed her as she ascended the stairs in silence, Fernanda endeavouring, as well as she could, to arrange her dress and smooth her ruffled hair. She was painfully conscious of the plainness of her appearance,—knew that her hair would not fall of itself into picturesque waves and curls like Cyrilla's—knew that her features were irregular, and that freckles disfigured the reddish fairness of her complexion,—and never forgot that her figure, diminutive and thin, was particularly unattractive. The early knowledge which she had acquired of these imperfections had ably seconded her mother's efforts to make them forgotten by diversified acquirements. Without decided talent, or even strong inclination for any of the arts, perseverance had made her a good musician, a correct painter, and a perfect dancer.

Count Ivan Polyak was leaving the Baroness' apartments as they entered them; he moved aside to let them pass, and, while they scarcely observed him, he stood and deliberately examined the three persons concerning whom he had lately heard so much, and with whose ages, habits, hopes, fears, and expectations he was perfectly acquainted. They became conscious of their gradual approach to the drawing-room by the barking of dogs,—were formally announced like ordinary visitors,

though in a voice inaudible from the noise in the room,—and some minutes elapsed before they were able to hear the few words of welcome murmured by the Baroness. Cold was the kiss and scrutinizing the glance bestowed on each niece; and Fernanda's lips closed rigidly, and Cyrilla's eyes filled with tears, when they saw their mother vainly struggling to conceal her annoyance at a reception so different from what she had expected.

"You have been long on your journey—Down, Jolie—Minkerl, Minkerl.....how can you be so tiresome!—I.....a.....expected you several days ago!"

"The weather was inclement, and I was ill."

"Dreadful misfortune being so unhealthy. I'm sure I hope Salzburg may agree with you. Nothing I dread so much as being near any one who is constantly ill—it is so very depressing, and one can't do any good, you know!"

"You speak like all those who do not know what illness is," answered her sister-in-law, with some bitterness; "from me at least you shall hear nothing of it, and my children are healthy in an unusual degree."

The Baroness fixed her eyes on Cyrilla, and observed,—“She is a complete Adlerkron; they have all light hair with natural curl and blue eyes: her eyes are darker than Rupert's—how old is she?”

“Seventeen.”

“And Fernanda?”

“Twenty-three.”

“How thankful you ought to be that the other two are in heaven! What would you have done with four daughters now?”

“I can never do otherwise than regret having lost my children,” replied her sister-in-law firmly. “Had it pleased God to leave them with me, he would have provided for them also. I have always observed that large families get on well in the world.”

“Humph! And what do you mean to do with these two?”

“I hope, with your assistance, to see them in time happily married.”

“That is, you have brought them here on speculation, and have taught them to think rationally about men and marriage? You have done well.”

“I hope I have been able to preserve a due medium,” said her sister-in-law with a slight degree of irony in her manner. “I think I can answer for my daughters not being unreasonable in their expectations.”

“So much the better; it would be absurd if they claimed the privilege of choice. You will allow that if any one ever had a right to choose—I was that person; and yet I married the man proposed by my father; and had Gottfried been old instead of young, ugly instead of handsome, I should still

have married him. Love had nothing to do with the matter at all !”

“ I remember hearing something to that purport,” said her sister-in-law ; “ but my daughters are still in ignorance of circumstances that occurred before they were born, and in no way concern them.”

“ O,” said the Baroness, “ I thought you might have told them the true state of the case when speaking of me. I do not see why they should not know that their uncle Gottfried chose me because he wanted capital for speculations,—perhaps also because I was the handsomest woman of his acquaintance, and that I married him to...to...please my father.”

“ And,” said her sister-in-law smiling, “ and to punish some one else with whom you had quarrelled.”

The Baroness ceased playing with her dogs. She even pushed Minkerl rudely away, as she answered, “ Precisely ; I did not choose the world to suppose me forsaken. The Waldens are too proud to endure pity !”

“ I believe,” said her sister-in-law smiling, “ I believe you have been much more envied than pitied. Your life has been a series of fortunate events ; every speculation of your husband’s succeeded beyond his most sanguine expectations ; you have enjoyed health and wealth, and have

been celebrated for your beauty. What can a woman desire more in this world?"

"Children to inherit my wealth—children of whom I could be proud when I grow old!"

"Ah, I had forgotten that—and children are such a source of interest all one's life, and such a comfort in one's old age—especially daughters."

"I don't care for daughters," rejoined the Baroness; "I should have liked to have had a son. You know of course," she added, "that, according to the wishes of Gottfried, I have adopted our nephew Rupert?"

Her sister-in-law bowed; a long pause ensued, which was broken by the latter asking in a somewhat constrained voice, "How Rupert had grown up—it was so many years since she had seen him."

"He is everything I could desire—gay, handsome, fashionable—a little obstinate sometimes; but no one is faultless. By the by, I have something of importance, about which I wish to speak to you the first time we are alone—this evening, perhaps, when the young people have gone to bed....."

But on this hint the young people, glad of the offered chance of escape, precipitately rose from their chairs, and, notwithstanding their aunt's invitation to remain to supper, and assurances that they had quite misunderstood her, they both left the room.

The conversation between the two who remained was, as may be supposed, about the marriage of Rupert and Cyrilla. The Baroness acknowledged the indiscretion of which she had been guilty, in having spoken to the former before he had seen his cousin ; and, although she did not seem to consider the inclinations of the latter of the slightest importance, she agreed with her sister-in-law in thinking that Cyrilla should be kept in ignorance of the plan until Rupert had seen and approved of her. She then spoke in terms of sincere admiration of her appearance—doubted not that both girls had been admirably educated ; and, in short, by commending her children, made her sister-in-law forget the coldness of her reception, and the unaccountable pettishness which had been so evident at the beginning of their interview. The ready acquiescence to all her plans put her into good humour ; and, utterly insensible to the wearied looks of the poor invalid traveller, she detained her discussing the same topics until near midnight ; nor even then would she have allowed her to go, had not her sister-in-law declared that she must at least ascertain that Fernanda had gone to bed. “ Fernanda never allows any one to undress me but herself, as it is then we talk over all our little house-affairs—she is an excellent housekeeper.”

“ It is a pity that she is a...rather...plain,” said the Baroness ; “ but if she be amiable, accom-

plished, and economical, why...one would not at all mind keeping her at home—every one cannot marry in this world, you know ! Wait a moment, and I can give you a skeleton-key to your apartments, which will enable you to enter without ringing the bell. Good night.”

The Baroness Carl took the key, and slowly descending the stairs entered her apartments unheard by her eldest daughter, whom she found, as she had expected, in the drawing-room ; but the poor girl had fallen fast asleep sitting perfectly upright in her chair, a small lamp burning dimly on the table beside her, and her hand grasping the key with which she had intended to have admitted her mother.

“ I believe I have been asleep,” she cried, starting up. “ Had you to wait long ? who opened the door for you ? ”

“ Your aunt has given me a key ; and in future, when she detains me so long, you must promise to go to bed.”

“ What on earth could have induced you to remain all this time with that disagreeable woman ? ” asked Fernanda, while she assisted her mother to undress.

A pause ensued. Her mother hesitated whether or not she should confide to her daughter the whole of her sister-in-law’s plan ; but the habit which she had acquired during the last few years of consulting

Fernanda on all occasions prevailed, and she related without the slightest reserve all that had been said, adding, that the idea of such a connexion was more familiar to her than her sister-in-law seemed to think, it had so often been proposed by their uncle Gottfried when they were mere children, as a good way of providing for Cyrilla and securing an eligible wife for Rupert.

“If you could only ascertain what kind of man he has become!” observed Fernanda, thoughtfully. “I can only remember when he visited us at Aix that he was a tall fair-haired boy, with most outrageously high spirits.”

“It would be a most desirable match,” said her mother, musingly, “in every way desirable—fortune, family, age, exactly what we could wish! Your aunt,” she added, looking up with a smile, “seemed purposely to avoid even the most distant allusion to your uncle Gottfried’s will, but of course it has influenced her on the present occasion—Rupert would never think of demanding Cyrilla’s little fortune!”

“Do you think it possible,” asked Fernanda, “that the five thousand Friedrichs d’or can have induced her to form this plan?”

“Most assuredly, most undoubtedly; and you must look out for some one who will at least agree to wait until her death; she will never otherwise give her consent to your marriage. It is a

most fortunate circumstance that she has chosen Rupert for Cyrilla ; and she is in earnest too, for she was very angry with him for refusing to remain here and not agreeing to marry her at once. I don't in the least blame him ; I think he was quite right ! ”

“ And now,” cried Fernanda, “ imagine his surprise when he sees her—think how he must love her when he knows her ! ”

The conversation continued long in the same strain, ending by an agreement that it would be advisable not only to keep Cyrilla in total ignorance of their hopes and expectations, but even to avoid, if it were possible, ever mentioning Rupert's name when she was present.

CHAPTER V.

THE Adlerkrons, or as our first acquaintance, the Baroness, chose to have them called, the *Carl* Adlerkrons, had been but a short time established in Salzburg when they received a letter from the Countess Falkenstein, proposing an immediate visit, and saying that she longed to see her stepmother and sisters again after so many years' separation. If the former had no objection she would take Cyrilla away with her; she knew that Fernanda was indispensable to her mother's comfort, or she would propose carrying off both, &c. &c. &c.

"How very kind of Melanie to write so soon, and to propose coming for me herself at this time of year," said Cyrilla. "You will allow me to go, of course?"

"Yes—I think so—most probably,—but I must first visit your aunt and hear what she says."

"My aunt!" repeated Cyrilla, with a look of surprise: "She can have no objection; and if she

have any inclination to direct or control us, I hope you will not permit it—your consent is sufficient for me.”

Her mother and sister exchanged looks; and then the former said quietly, “I think it better to ask her opinion nevertheless. Will you go with me?”

“No, thank you. I cannot endure those odious dogs; and besides, I believe I—I rather dislike my aunt than otherwise.”

“You must not dislike her; she really means well, and is interested about you.”

“Perhaps so; but it is impossible to force affection, and my feelings towards her nearly resemble antipathy. Ask Fernanda if she thinks my aunt a lovable person.”

Fernanda shook her head, and bent over her work.

“May I write an answer to Melanie?”

“Not until I return,” replied her mother, with a little decided nod of her head, which Cyrilla understood so well that even when the door closed between them she refrained from the expression of annoyance that rose to her lips, and silently continued her occupation of sketching imaginary likenesses of her sister Melanie, while awaiting the termination of the conference. It lasted longer than any of them had expected, for her mother met with opposition as violent as it was unexpected.

The Baroness would not hear of Cyrilla's leaving Salzburg—how could her sister-in-law think of anything so absurd? or how could any reasonable person imagine that an introduction to the society of a provincial town like Exfort could in any way promote their plans for her marriage? The case would be different if Rupert and his regiment were quartered there; but of that there was no chance for the next year or two. In the mean time the less Cyrilla was seen or known the better: she had already perceived that even in Salzburg people were beginning to pay her more attention than was desirable!

Prudence predominated, and the Baroness Carl yielded; but she softened the announcement to Cyrilla by saying that she thought it very probable her aunt would change her mind in the course of a few months, and that it would only be necessary to request Melanie to postpone her visit, and delay her journey for a short time.

That same day the Baroness wrote a letter to Rupert, beginning with entreaties, and ending with commands that he would forthwith return to Salzburg—his aunt Sophy was ready to receive him as a son, and Cyrilla was everything that the most fastidious of men could desire.

Rupert did not keep her long in suspense; his answer came by return of post.

“He was very glad to hear that his cousin was

so charming—he liked having pretty cousins. On the subject of marriage his ideas were unchanged ; no one should ever force a wife upon him. With respect to returning to Salzburg, that was at present impossible ; he could not ask for leave of absence for some time, and when he did it would be to go to Exfort, where he hoped to be in the month of May, for the purpose of purchasing a place called Freilands from Prince N. Melanie and Falkenstein had written to him about it, saying that it was within a few miles of the town, well stocked with game, and exactly the sort of thing he had been trying to get.”

Now, completely convinced that the only chance of bringing Rupert and Cyrilla together would be to send the latter to Exfort, when Melanie again wrote to say that she would delay her journey to Salzburg until February, and that she would take her sister to Berlin and have her presented at court before they went to Exfort—there was no further difficulty made, the Baroness however observing, “That she hoped Melanie was steady enough to take charge of such a girl as Cyrilla !”

“Cyrilla is steadier than you imagine.”

“She is, however, very young,” continued the Baroness, “and so pretty that she will have opportunities enough of making a fool of herself.”

“I must say, I do not apprehend any danger whatever.”

“But I do. Melanie is too full of sentiment and poetry to observe what is going on about her. I heard lately that she believes in ghosts and animal magnetism, and all sorts of nonsense.”

“That will not, however, make her house a dangerous place for Cyrilla. During the years we have been separated I have constantly heard of her from friends and relations of my own with whom she is intimate. When she first married I was uneasy about her I confess, but the accounts have been satisfactory in every respect, and she has merely retained a few odd romantic notions that only find vent in words; besides, Count Falkenstein is such a steady rational domestic man that I could not desire a better protector for Cyrilla than he will be.”

“Perhaps so, if he would give himself the trouble, to be one.....but he lives in his office and his study, and pores from morning till night over parchments and protocols, as if he were prime minister instead of president of a provincial government.”

“I have been told that he has a great deal of business to transact,” said the Baroness Carl as she rose to take leave; “but he oversees and rules his own house as completely as he presides over the district confided to his charge.”

“Then you mean to write to him about Rupert perhaps?”

“Certainly not; but if you think we ought to explain to Melanie or hint to Cyrilla.....”

“Better say nothing,” cried the Baroness quickly. “I would give much that I had never mentioned Cyrilla’s name to Rupert! Most probably what I have said will prevent him from ever looking at her.”

The Baroness Carl smiled incredulously.

“Oh, you don’t know what a spirit of opposition he has! However, there is no use in talking about it any more; let us hope the best, and don’t forget that I expect you all to coffee to-morrow. We must talk about the Carnival, and consider whether or not it be advisable for Cyrilla to go into society here or not.”

The question was decided to Cyrilla’s satisfaction; she was to be allowed to enjoy herself at that age when enjoyment is unalloyed by recollections of the past or care for the future.

And the Carnival commenced. The Carnival! that word which, to untravelled English ears, conveys merely some vague ideas of masquerades and mummeries, but to the inhabitants of catholic Europe pleasures innumerable, the more valued because the time is restricted from Twelfth Night to Shrove Tuesday. How often is the question asked, “Shall we have a short or long Carnival?” How often are the new almanacs consulted; and when the weeks are few, how quickly the balls

follow each other ; how much pleasure (perhaps we should say amusement) is compressed into the limited space. Every rank of society has its balls, from the court down to the very lowest grade of servants. Dancing is in Germany a passion which pervades all classes alike—in other respects they have but little in common, and seldom mix. Commerce has not often enabled Germans to amass enormous riches; and even were individuals of the burgher class to become possessed of extraordinary wealth, it would not raise them above their original sphere, so strong is the line of demarcation drawn by birth and fortified by prejudice.

In England.....but no ; we will not say what wealth can do there. Cleverer pens have already described the rich *parvenu's* progress—his almost certain elevation, though devoid of all that commands respect save wealth alone. We must, however, also remember that in England talent and intellectual eminence of every description will enable the possessor to rise, perhaps even more quickly, and certainly more agreeably, in the social scale, whereas both are alike powerless in Germany. Birth and genealogy decide the position in life so completely that it is a physical impossibility to change it, inasmuch as none can give themselves other fathers and forefathers than those from whom they have their origin ; while the multiplicity of the class denominated noble, enabling them gener-

ally to marry among themselves, this spirit of *caste* is kept up with a rigour little inferior to that of India. The low caste (not noble) are very frequently admirers or worshippers of the high caste (nobles); many wish also to belong to them—some, irritated by the insuperable barrier opposed to their ambition, hate and ridicule the whole aristocracy; while others, more reasonable, are satisfied with their citizen state, and regard the nobles as a class apart, who have peculiar ideas, habits, and whims of their own, to which they have an hereditary right not worth disputing. A “noble” in Germany, no matter how impoverished he may be, or how low his station in life, never loses the thought, “I am a nobleman;” and this idea enables him to look down on the richest and most prosperous burgher with a sort of proud contentedness that would be perfectly incomprehensible to an Englishman.

The prerogatives of the nobility have lately been much and justly curtailed; some are however still retained, and among them one which is not considered such in England—the right of being presented at and frequenting the court. This privilege, possessed with few exceptions exclusively by them, is pretty generally claimed, though valued by many more as an outward and visible sign of nobility than as a means of exhibiting their loyalty; but as in all communities it is the endeavour of a

few to raise themselves above the level of those with whom they associate, and one observes this propensity strongly developed, as phrenologists would say, wherever women take the lead, so, even in the social intercourse of the privileged class, there are well known divisions and distinctions, the most common and comprehensive being that called the *Haute Volée*. Mrs Trollope, in her amusing work, "Vienna and the Austrians," speaks of *la crème* and *crème de la crème* as further distinctions used at Vienna. That many other metropolises aspire to the same extreme nicety in the classification of their "first society" is beyond a doubt, and if they fail, it is not from want of good will but want of numbers. The effort has been, and is being made, in smaller, and very small cities, though where a few fortunate individuals fancy themselves *crème*, their numerical force is not sufficient to substantiate their claims, or enable them to be quite exclusive. In order to fill their rooms, they are under the necessity of inviting to their balls and soirées those who are modestly contented with the name of *Haute Volée*, and who are for the same reason obliged to mix unreservedly with the court-going nobility.

That in Salzburg there was a *Haute Volée* was a matter of course—the more tyrannical as there was no court with equalizing condescension to moderate its arrogance. The Baroness Adlerkron was one

of its members, though not the most revered among them; but even those who spoke slightly of her conduct past and present, and who unreservedly ridiculed her ill-lighted ball-room and economical suppers, did not dare to oppose her sway. She was, and had been all her life, what is called fashionable, nor was she likely to lose that enviable title to consideration, having both wealth and connexion to secure her claims. As soon as she discovered that her nieces were even more accomplished than she had expected, their acquirements were on all occasions put in requisition, without the slightest consideration for their inclinations. The very unwillingness which they occasionally manifested to leave their mother acting as a sort of stimulant to her selfish feelings, she not only insisted on having them constantly with her, but also accompanying her wherever she went. On the evenings that she now was "at home," her house began to be crowded; there alone tableaux were got up, and masks and sledging parties arranged. Count Polyak was no longer the only frequent visiter, though he continued to appear day by day with a punctuality which first surprised and then amused both sisters. Their presence never in the least interfered with his habits: he came at the same hour, sat in the same place, talked in the same monotonous tone of the same not particularly interesting events; and though his attentions became by de-

grees a little divided, the so very much larger portion was still devoted to the Baroness, that she was quite satisfied; indeed, the idea of finding rivals in her nieces had never once entered her head, so certain did she still feel of the power of her station and beauty.

The limited weeks of the Carnival passed gaily over, and the sound of sledging bells and mazurka music was still ringing in Cyrilla's ears, when another letter from her step-sister arrived to name the day of her arrival. "How quickly the time has passed since we came here!" she said, after having carefully read the long, well-written pages; "I never thought I should have liked Salzburg so much; and Count Polyak says it is even pleasanter in summer!"

"But," said her mother, "in summer there are no balls or masked sledging parties!"

"Of course not; but waterfall, lake, and alp parties must be still gayer. I should not at all have minded if Melanie had written to say she could not come for me until autumn!"

"Indeed!"

"The north of Germany," she continued, "is not to be compared to the south; even my aunt allows that the climate here is pleasanter, the country much more beautiful; but at all events, people are of more consequence to me than places. Here I have you and Fernanda, and dozens

of gay acquaintances, and there, nobody I care about, excepting Melanie and my cousin Rupert. I confess I rather wish to see *him*."

Her mother and sister were silent, and she added, "Neither of you appear to remember how very near a relation he is—a sort of brother in fact, as we have no other. Count Polyak says I am exceedingly like him."

"What else does Count Polyak say, my dear?" asked her mother, smiling; "he seems to have become your oracle lately."

"He is the only person who can, or will, tell me anything about Rupert," said Cyrilla, laughing.

"And what has he told you?" asked Fernanda, quickly.

"I thought you felt no sort of curiosity or interest concerning him," said Cyrilla, archly; "at least you said something to that effect a short time ago, when I spoke to you about him."

"Perhaps she did not like to exert her imagination so unnecessarily," observed her mother; "so uselessly, I may say, for neither of you can possibly have the least idea what he now is."

"I have a tolerably good idea, nevertheless," said Cyrilla, pertinaciously. "In appearance he is a perfect Adlerkron, tall, fair, and, from what Count Polyak says of him in other respects, I wish with all my heart he were really my brother! He was immensely popular here, and more than one of

our acquaintances had serious intentions of marrying him!"

"Marrying him!" repeated her sister. "Was Mademoiselle de Bockenheim one of them?"

"Yes. How did you know that?"

"I knew she had been in the habit of coming here with her father, and I asked her something about Rupert one evening"

"So you have been making inquiries too!" cried Cyrilla, laughing; "but I don't think you have heard as much as I have."

"I have not heard of his intending to marry Mademoiselle de Bockenheim," said Fernanda, smiling.

"Nor I either," rejoined Cyrilla; "and Count Polyak says it is more than probable he will never marry—certainly not until he is quite old. He has got that unfortunate mania with which men of large fortune are so often afflicted, of fancying that no woman really cares for him, but that any one would marry him, in order to be joint possessor of Windhorst, Lanneck, Felsheim, and all his other possessions."

"And yet," said Fernanda, "I have heard that he is a man one could like for himself alone."

"O yes; Count Polyak says he liked him very much; every one liked him; and as, after all, his matrimonial fancies do not in any way concern us, I have determined not to let them interfere with

the affection which one ought to feel for so near a relation. Don't you think I am right, mamma?"

"Quite right. And now, go and let Justine try on your new dresses; she says you run away from her just as you used to do when you were a child!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE day on which the Countess Falkenstein^o was to arrive was spent in anxious expectation. The sisters had not met for twelve years, and a good deal of curiosity was mixed with a sort of affectionate solicitude. While their mother, according to a custom acquired during years of constant ill health, lay on a sofa and slept, Fernanda and Cyrilla kept up a whispered conversation, which, from the force of habit, promoted instead of disturbing her slumbers. Long and earnestly they spoke, for it was probably the last time they would be alone together for many months, and as they had never yet been separated even for a day, these months assumed the importance of years, and reiterated were Fernanda's entreaties that her sister would write often, and without reserve.

Cyrilla was too happy herself to observe the effort which it cost her companion to speak com-

posedly of their separation; but she listened attentively to her proffered advice, and made many promises, which, in the sequel, she found it impossible to fulfil.

“Melanie does not seem to be very exact as to hours,” she observed, at the end of a silence which had lasted some minutes. “She wrote that she would arrive about two o’clock, and it will soon be four, and so dark in these rooms that I cannot see to work any more. I wonder how she will like my aunt’s having invited a large party to stare at her!”

“Not at all, I should think,” answered Fernanda. “I am sure she would prefer spending the evening alone with us; and if she arrive late, which seems probable now, it will be very disagreeable to her changing her dress to meet a number of people she does not care to see. But, talking of dress,” she continued, rising quickly, “reminds me that I have not given Justine any directions about mamma’s.”

“What’s the matter!” cried their mother, starting up; “has Melanie arrived?”

“No, mamma. I am sorry I have disturbed you.”

“I have slept long enough, too long I believe,” she said, smothering a yawn. “Your aunt requested I would go to her early; so I think, if you will

ring for Justine, I may as well dress and go at once."

"I suppose you allow me to remain here, and receive Melanie," said Cyrilla.

"Yes; but tell her that your aunt expects to see her."

Cyrilla returned to her place at the window. It was in a sort of alcove, formed by the thickness of the walls, and raised a few steps above the level of the rest of the room. The height of the windows from the floor gave a sombre prison-like appearance to the apartment, but had the great advantage of securing the inhabitants from being seen by passengers in the street, while the elevation gave them a more extended view, both up and down it. As the evening closed in, and heavy drops of rain began to platch into the half-melted snow, Cyrilla retreated to the stove, and sitting down beside it, seemed to think profoundly—and, in fact, thoughts came crowding fast upon her, chasing each other like the phantasma of a dream; but if one might judge, by the half-smiling tranquil expression of her delicate childlike face as it rested in the palm of her hand, the thoughts were of a cheerful, almost pleasant description. Let us not attempt to scrutinize them; they were those of any girl of her age when on the eve of a journey to an unknown land and to unknown people: she would inevitably fall in the estimation of the grave reader were

even an attempt to be made to follow the wild excursions of her imagination, as her cousin Rupert, of whom she knew little, and the town of Exfort, of which she knew nothing, passed before her mind's eye,—the President's house—shoals of new acquaintances, and scores of officers, who all danced inimitably ! A dim, distant vision of something or somebody peculiarly interesting and attractive followed ; and then the long-expected sound of carriage wheels, and a postilion's horn became audible, the latter making "assurance doubly sure" that travellers were approaching. Never had a horn sounded more gaily,—and that is saying a good deal, for all postilions have that appendage in Germany, and on entering and leaving a provincial town, blow it lustily too—on the latter occasion solely for the purpose of attracting attention, the sound drawing all idlers to the windows ; and, at an early hour in the morning, it is rather amusing to watch the different stages of the various toilets, from the wild-looking head which has just left the pillow, to the half drawn-on coat, that, in the hurry of opening the window, hangs hussar-like over the shoulder.

Cyrilla's haste in ringing the bell, and ordering the door to be opened, was unnecessary. The Bavarian postilions, in their blue and silver liveries, on turning the corner of the street, had put their horses into a walk : had they been asked why,

they would have said, it was on account of the rough pavement, or uncertainty about which was the Walden house; but we know better,—they had begun to blow their favourite song—

“ Die Senderin ist a Mädel
Wie Milly und wie Blut,
Sie ist dem frischen Jäger
Vom ganzen Herzen gut.”

And until it was ended there was no chance of more rapid motion—the very horses knew it, they stretched out their heads and shook themselves in their harness as if already on their way to the stable. The appearance, however, of the ostentatiously parading porter at the entrance to the house prevented a *da capo*, and a few words of encouragement spoken to the horses brought them into a trot, and the large heavy travelling carriage, with the usual noise and commotion, under the archway.

“ My dear Melanie,” cried Cyrilla, eagerly, “ we have been expecting you for hours! the day has appeared endless to me! We thought from your letter that you would arrive at two o’clock.”

“ So I should—or even earlier, had I been travelling with the President; but when I am alone I never hurry myself: if you are punctual you will win his heart directly. Let me look at you,” she added, drawing her towards the window, “ you

have grown taller of course, but your face seems just the same, as well as I can judge in this dark room."

"Justine, bring the lamp," said Cyrilla, "and a something to eat. I dare say you are hungry," she added, turning to Melanie, who was throwing aside her shawl.

"Not at all. I dined at Reichenhall, where we last changed horses, and one of the causes of my delay was going to see the salt springs there: I had to descend under ground, and they made me put on a coat and a broad-brimmed hat, and gave me a light in my hand. I make it a point to see every thing of that kind now, as I am at present writing a description of my rambles in my native land."

"Are you, indeed!" said Cyrilla, "you must let me read it before it is printed—what is the name to be?"

"I think I shall call it, 'Wild Flowers plucked by the Way to form a Wreath of Prose and Poesy!' You have no idea of the importance of an attractive name for works of this kind. But now tell me—where is Fernanda—and where is....."

"They are at my aunt's, where a large party have assembled expressly to see you. It is very annoying; for, as you only remain one night here, we would rather have had you all to ourselves."

"It would have been pleasanter, as I don't want

to see your Salzburg people," she answered, taking her sister's arm, and walking into the adjoining room. "Tell me, love," she continued, looking round her with a calm scrutinizing gaze, "tell me, is your—a—our mother satisfied to live in these apartments?"

"O yes; she says we ought to be glad to have them. Had you but seen them when we first came here, you would have had reason to be surprised, but since they have been properly furnished, they do well enough. We never see any one here, as we are obliged to spend almost our whole time with my aunt, who scarcely allows Fernanda a few hours a-day to practise either her singing or any thing else, as she is accustomed to do."

"Practise! must she still practise?"

"Fernanda does, regularly."

"And is then your mother—just—what—she used to be?" asked Melanie, with some hesitation.

"I don't quite understand you," said Cyrilla, looking towards her inquiringly.

"I mean.....does she come into your room in the morning with her watch in her hand, saying, 'Time gone past—never can be recalled.' Are you obliged to get up as early as formerly and learn all day?"

"O no," cried Cyrilla, laughing. "I wish

mamma were strong enough to do so now! It was latterly Fernanda who took her place, and used to talk of the proper employment of time, and the necessity of acquiring knowledge."

"Good heavens!" cried Melanie, with a look of alarm, "you don't mean to say that Fernanda, *my* sister Fernanda, has become a pedagogue in petticoats!"

"A what?" asked Cyrilla.

"No matter—is Fernanda like her mother?"

"Yes, very."

"In mind or person?"

"Both."

"Well, thank goodness you are not—you are the image of my handsome—my glorious father!" She bent forward and kissed her, as the French say, with *effusion*.

"Did you.....do you.....not like mamma?" asked Cyrilla, hesitatingly.

"Don't look so shocked, love—I daresay I shall like her now extremely—In fact I did like her formerly as much as my fear of her would permit."

"How could any one be afraid of mamma?" exclaimed Cyrilla.

"Not good children like you and Fernanda; but has she never told you what a wild spoiled creature she found me when she married? How unmanage-

able I was—how I was sent to school, and returned home in the holidays not having learned anything?”

“No. She told me you had a great talent for drawing and painting, which you neglected most unpardonably.”

This was a fact of which Melanie did not like the recollection. It had been the remark of one of her schoolfellows in a moment of envious feeling, “That Mademoiselle d’Adlerkron inherited her genius for drawing from her maternal grandfather, who had been a painter!” From that day Melanie had thrown aside her crayons, and no threats or entreaties had ever been able to induce her to cultivate the talent that so eminently predominated in her nature as to be inextinguishable. The ideas denied one form of expression sought another: the fertile imagination found vent in rhymes and in the composition of picturesque dresses, which were shown to advantage by the placing of her tall graceful figure in the most fascinating but sometimes too evidently studied attitudes.

“I never draw,” she said after a pause; “but the little knowledge I have of colours is very useful in choosing dresses. I hope you know how to dress yourself well, Cyrilla? I assure you it is quite as necessary as any other accomplishment for a woman.”

“I have had but little experience,” answered

Cyrilla. "We have always been so poor that economy has been our first object."

"How very distressing! In fact, our aunt upstairs is your only hope, I suppose?"

"Exactly—and rather a forlorn one too. But I am sure she is expecting you all this time!"

"Let her expect me a little longer then—she is not likely to leave *me* a legacy."

"As to that," said Cyrilla, "we are unpleasantly enough in her power; for if she refuse her consent to either Fernanda's or my marriage, no matter how eligible it may be, we must wait until her death to inherit my uncle's legacy, and her life is nearly as good as ours. Rupert is her heir. She informed us that she had adopted him, before we had been an hour in her house. I think she did so to prevent our expectations from being too great."

"One might almost think that wealth attracted wealth," said Melanie, "rich people inherit so much more than poor. My aunt would do better were she to bestow some of her large fortune on you and Fernanda instead of Rupert, who does not want, and will not thank her for it."

"We shall see him in Berlin, shall we not?" asked Cyrilla.

"Of course, and as we shall be there a week or ten days, he can hardly avoid seeing you."

"Hardly avoid seeing me!" repeated Cyrilla.

“There is no use in concealing from you, Cyrilla, that he showed such unpardonable indifference—in fact looked so bored when I spoke to him of you, that I resolved he should not hear that you were to accompany me home. I don’t think he even observed my silence about you the last time I saw him—he talked of nothing but Virginie de Lindesmar’s marriage to the Vicomte de Rubigny. Now, well as he knows the Lindesmars, they ought not to interest him more than his own cousins-german !”

“I suppose,” said Cyrilla, thoughtfully, “he does not like poor relations.”

“O no, I must not do him injustice,” cried Melanie, warmly ; “that is not at all like him—he is both good-natured and generous, and it is impossible not to forgive his carelessness when one sees that he does not mean anything unkind. However, he will be at Exfort the beginning of May, and then you will see enough of him to judge for yourself. What noise is that ? Who is coming ?”

“Mamma and Fernanda most probably,” answered Cyrilla, opening the door ; and she then watched with some curiosity the meeting between her mother and stepsister. Nothing could be more cordial. It seemed as if the thin bent form and care-worn features of her mother had dispelled the awe of Melanie on the one side ; while the affection-

ate manner and dignified grace of her still beautiful stepdaughter had, on the other, nearly removed the misgivings which reminiscences of twelve years before had inspired.

"Is Melanie at all altered, mamma?" asked Cyrilla, as she observed the almost anxious scrutiny with which her mother observed her.

"No—yes—that is, her face is the same—her figure has grown much fuller."

"Oh don't say so," exclaimed Melanie, "the idea makes me miserable. I should like to be just as Cyrilla is—slight, yet not thin."

"Cyrilla must have quite grown out of your recollection," observed Fernanda.

"Very nearly, and you too—let me look at you." Fernanda bore the inspection with a good-humoured smile.

"I could be afraid of you, Fernanda—you look too sensible, and," she added with a sigh, "I fear *trop peu sensible* for me!"

"And yet," said Fernanda, archly, "I like poetry, and know *one* little volume of poems quite by heart!"

"Is it possible!" cried Melanie, blushing with pleasure; "and I did not dare to send any of my works to you!"

"Pray send them to us in future," said her step-mother; "your poems are very pretty and lady-like."

"I did not know," said Melanie, "whether or not you allowed my sisters to read fiction of any kind. You formerly disapproved of it, I know."

"Because," said her mother, smiling; "you were at that time so fond of such works, that you would not read anything else."

"I don't know what mamma may have been formerly," said Cyrilla, laughing; "but she can now, with all her wisdom, become as absorbed as any one in a new novel!"

"I am glad to hear it," said Melanie; "for my recollections made me suppose that she condemned all works of imagination. I may now perhaps venture to say, that those who do so are deprived not only of one of the greatest intellectual enjoyments, but of two-thirds of the literature of every known language."

"Do you hear, mamma?" said Cyrilla.

"Yes, and I agree with Melanie; but there are some years of one's life that ought not to be devoted to mere 'enjoyment,' even if it be, as she correctly observes, 'intellectual.' I should not, my dear child, have limited your reading of such works, had I not a few years ago discovered a tendency to romantic sentimentality in your disposition, which might have caused you much imaginary and some real unhappiness in the course of your life: but," she added, glancing towards Melanie, "but I am happy to say all that seems now quite eradicated."

Melanie bent forward eagerly, as if about to speak, but suddenly drawing in her breath, remained silent. Perhaps her stepmother observed the movement, for she continued, as if some opposition had been made to her last remark, "Yes, I am happy to say so, for nothing can be more wretched than a girl who is poor, and therefore in some degree compelled to marry, having her head full of romantic ideas that never can be realized: either she refuses establishments which might content any rational woman, or, accepting one, her whole existence afterwards is a series of petty annoyances, which, if she have more feeling than intellect, end by completely undermining her domestic happiness."

Melanie, confused and visibly shrinking, made no attempt to interrupt the speaker, who continued, "Nothing is more unfortunate for a woman than to have a too exalted and poetical idea of the passion of love; disappointment must be her portion in such a case, for there is little poetry in real life, and the sooner we learn to be satisfied with plain homely reality the better. I shall consign Cyrilla to your care to-morrow, my dear Melanie, the healthiest and happiest of human beings: watch over these inestimable blessings, and bring her back to me as"

"You are filling my mind with doubts and fears," exclaimed Melanie, anxiously interrupting

her. "How can I be sure that the climate of the north of Germany will suit her constitution as well as that of Italy? She is no longer a child—may find somebody at Exfort on whom she may bestow her affections

"In either of these cases, your responsibility ceases," said the Baroness Carl, with a satisfied smile. "I have not the least objection to her finding 'somebody' at Exfort worthy of her affection, as, with the exception of Fernanda, I know no one more likely to be happy herself, and promote the happiness of another, as Cyrilla." While speaking, the idea of Rupert filled her mind as completely as if he alone existed, as if there were not other 'bodies' in the world possessing quite as much attraction for her daughter as her refractory anti-matrimonially disposed nephew.

"I think," said Fernanda, "we ought now to go to my aunt."

CHAPTER VII.

THE effect produced by Melanie's "graceful presence" on her aunt's guests is not worth recording; still less worthy of notice would be the journey northward with Cyrilla, in a comfortable unadventurous travelling carriage, during the short days of a not particularly cheerful winter. They reached Berlin a day later than they had intended, as Melanie never left any place at the time appointed; but the President was still at the hotel, and apparently so immersed in business, that they had more than a week still at their disposal. It was spent in visiting Melanie's friends and acquaintances, introducing Cyrilla to them, drives in the environs when the weather permitted, and presentations to the different members of the royal family.

The day on which Cyrilla was to be presented to the Crown Princess arrived—the hour appointed was late, but Melanie retired to her dressing-room soon after four o'clock. She was at that age when

art and attention can still almost quite supply the charm of youth, and therefore considered her toilet an affair of great importance. "Besides," she observed half apologetically to her sister, who laughed at the idea of so much time being so employed, "Besides, my dear, we have been out the whole afternoon, and my nose being more susceptible of cold than yours, if I were hurried in dressing, I should infallibly have a flushed face all the evening. You can amuse yourself trying the new music you chose to-day."

"But do you not think it may disturb the President?" asked Cyrilla; "he is in the next room writing."

"O no; he says *your* music never disturbs him, he quite delights in hearing you sing."

Cyrilla turned to the pianoforte, and began to look over a quantity of music that lay upon it, occasionally singing, but more frequently playing the different parts intended for the voice, until a thick snow-shower, beginning to hurry on the close of evening, made her efforts to distinguish the notes fruitless. She rose, watched for a few seconds the hurrying pedestrians in the street, and then, walking to the other end of the room, took possession of that side of a comfortable *causeuse* which enabled her to turn away from the cheerless prospect that the windows offered.

While still indulging in a few sage thoughts on

the shortness of winter days, the gloominess of falling snow, and the bore of presentations at court, which gave people the trouble of dressing—going out—waiting—and all for from ten to fifteen minutes' conversation (if such it may be called) with some royal personage, who had previously to be informed of one's name and condition, in order to be able to ask the few uninteresting questions usual on such occasions, she heard the sound of quick approaching steps, and a moment after a tall officer entered the room, saying to the servant, who had in vain endeavoured to announce him,—“Tell the Countess I have been at Potsdam the last ten days, and beg of her not in the least to hurry her toilet.” He evidently did not at first perceive Cyrilla; for, throwing his gloves on the table, he unbuckled his sabre and walked to the window—then, lightly humming a tune, turned back and strode towards the stove, where he suddenly became aware of the presence of a half-reclining figure enveloped in a large shawl, with a black velvet bonnet and long veil that concealed the face nearly as much as the gathering darkness made it indistinct.

“Pardon.....” he said with a careless bow. “I was not aware that any one was in the room—I am waiting to see the Countess Falkenstein.” He then seated himself, and pushing aside some pamphlets and cards which lay on the table, took up a

small book bound in red morocco leather, and closed with a gold pencil case, which Cyrilla knew contained her sister's manuscript poems. Seeing him deliberately open it, she extended her hand hastily, saying, "Excuse me, I must beg to have that book, it is.....it is not an Album."

"I know very well what it is," he answered, smiling; and for the first time looking at her with a sort of half-awakened curiosity. "If I were not the most inattentive of listeners, I should by this time have known all Melanie's poems by heart."

Placing the book on the table, he drew his chair closer to the *causeuse*, and attempted to catch a furtive glimpse of her face without being rude; but Cyrilla now purposely turned her head away. She knew, from the words "Melanie's Poems," that her cousin Rupert was beside her; and, although not offended at the indifference which he had so evidently manifested about her, a slight feeling of mortification, which she found it impossible to repress, made her resolve not to be the first to claim relationship.

"Then you have read the contents of this little book?" he continued.

"Yes."

"Are an intimate friend of my cousin Melanie's, perhaps?"

"Yes."

A pause ensued, and the silence in the room was

broken by an ill fastened window-blind of painted canvass descending spontaneously—at first slowly, but ending with a jerk, covering one of the windows, and excluding so much of the little remaining light that they could merely distinguish each other's figures. Cyrilla's first inclination was to leave the room, her next to indulge in a gay laugh. She yielded to the latter without restraint, and before it had ceased, her cousin suddenly started up, exclaiming, "Can you forgive me for not recognising you? The darkness—the impossibility of seeing your features—the—the—surprise at so unexpected a meeting.....Have you been long here? When did you return from Italy?"

"Some months ago."

"Indeed! I thought you had only just arrived. Have you been staying at Exfort?"

"No, but I am going there now."

"Your mother told me....."

"My mother!" repeated Cyrilla in astonishment.

"Perhaps I am mistaken, it may have been your sister....."

"You must be doubly mistaken, for my sister determined not to tell you any thing about me. You seemed to feel so little interest when she spoke of me....."

"You surely would not wish me to let *her* know the deep interest I must always feel in every thing that concerns you!"

"And why not? It is surely very natural."

"Oh, un—doubtedly.....but.....she is, we must hope, unacquainted with a.....You know what I mean."

"Indeed I do not in the least."

"Well, but you may easily suppose that I could not speak to her as I would to your mother, so I—pretended an indifference I was far from feeling."

"You pretended indifference! The feint was little creditable to you, Rupert!"

"Excuse me. I think otherwise; it was for your sake, not mine, and I expected praise instead of blame."

"I.....don't comprehend.....We don't understand each other at all it seems.....You are not in the least what I expected you to be!" said Cyrilla, leaning back with a gesture of annoyance.

"Provoking creature!" exclaimed Rupert starting from his chair, and beginning to walk up and down the room. Cyrilla, to whom his words and conduct every moment became more inexplicable, rose also and moved towards the door. "Stay, stay," he cried eagerly, placing himself before her. "Do not let us part in anger—rather let me take advantage of this opportunity to explain anything which may have offended you in my letter. It was your mother who insisted on my writing. She dictated every word—would not let me change a single hard expression—said that nothing else

would ever induce you to give up the idea of..... Pshaw.....you must understand me now !”

“Less than ever,” said Cyrilla, quietly. “I never received any letter from you, and could almost imagine you were talking to some one else, if your words did not remind me of both my mother’s and sister’s avoidance of your name,—their determination never to speak of you. What you have done to offend them, I know not ; for my own part, I hoped to have renewed the unrestrained intercourse of.....”

“Hah !” exclaimed Rupert, retiring quickly a few steps from her.

“Don’t be alarmed,” said Cyrilla with a slight degree of irony in her voice ; “I was merely going to observe that with me at least you might be intimate and unreserved, without the horrors of matrimony in perspective.”

“True—very true,” said Rupert thoughtfully. “If you really can forgive my not returning your I mean a.....if, in short, you will be satisfied with friendship, why.....let us be friends, though—fate has decreed that we should never be more nearly connected.”

“Your manner is odd, almost ungracious,” said Cyrilla ; “but I suppose I must take you as you are, and try to forget my disappointment at finding you exactly the contrary of all I had hoped. I accept, then, the unfriendly offer of friendship you

have made me, and assure you," she added, half laughing, "that I have no designs whatever either on your heart or fortune." She held out her hand as she spoke.

He seized it with a sort of vehemence, exclaiming, "Oh, Virginie, Virginie, I don't know yet whether you are a—devil or an angel, but," he added in a whisper, "don't lead me into temptation any more, for....."

"Are you mad?" cried Cyrilla, forcibly withdrawing her hand from his. "What paltry affectation is this—pretending to forget my very name!"

"No, I don't forget it," said Rupert, "neither what it was, nor will I forget what it is, if I can help it."

"There is—there must be some strange confusion here," said Cyrilla, slowly; "Rupert, *do* you know who I am?"

"I should think so," he answered with a short laugh.

"Then why do you call me Virginie?"

"I beg your pardon," he said, bowing ironically, "I should perhaps have said Madame la Vicomtesse, and have hoped that M. le Vicomte *se portait bien*?"

"Ah," cried Cyrilla, "now I perceive that you have taken me for some other person, and I am glad of it, very glad that all your odd speeches

were intended for a Virginie somebody and not for our cousin Cyrilla Adlerkron."

Fortunately for Rupert, who stood petrified with amazement, the door at this moment opened and Melanie entered.

"Why, Cyrilla, is it possible that you are still here?" she exclaimed, "the carriage will be at the door in ten minutes, and you will not be dressed. Rupert, I am glad to see you,—that is, I cannot see you at all; but I am happy that you have found your way here at last. I thought I should have been obliged to introduce you to Cyrilla, but it seems you have become acquainted without my assistance."

"Yes," said Cyrilla, "we have commenced our acquaintance oddly enough, and the impression made on me has not been altogether satisfactory."

"The infernal darkness of the room, the extraordinary resemblance of both voice and laugh," muttered Rupert.

"After all it was but a mistake," said Cyrilla gaily; "let us forget it and be friends, though, as you so heroically observed, *fate has decreed that we should never be more nearly connected.*"

"You cannot easily be more nearly connected than you are," said Melanie, who had been too much occupied ordering lamps to have heard more

than the last words; "the relationship is so near, that I have no doubt Rupert will presume upon it, and pay you all sorts of attention,—that is, when he has nothing else to do, or does not happen to be particularly engaged with half-a-dozen others. He does not think it necessary," she added pointedly, "under any other circumstances to be attentive to his *cousins*."

"Judge of me for yourself, Cyrilla," said Rupert, "and do not let this unlucky beginning prejudice you against me,—the more so, as I can never explain or excuse myself in any way to you."

"Pray, Cyrilla, go and dress," cried Melanie a little impatiently; "we dare not be late on such an occasion,—you can talk nonsense with Rupert some other time."

"Wait a moment and let me look at you," said Rupert, eagerly.

"No; but *you* may wait until I return if you choose," she answered carelessly.

He stood with his arms folded, looking after her as she walked quickly down the passage, along which candles and lamps were being carried in all directions, when, obliged to move aside to admit the bearers of lights into the room, he turned to Melanie and observed: "You might have let me know that Cyrilla was here."

"You did not choose to listen to me when I spoke of her to you before I went to Salzburg,"

she replied with affected indifference, as she turned to the light and began to arrange her bracelets.

Rupert bit his lip, and then asked abruptly, "Is she handsome?"

"No, not exactly."

"Merely good-looking, perhaps?"

Melanie twirled her bracelets as she answered, "She is not as handsome as I am—was, I ought to say."

"Oh," said Rupert smiling, "that is not necessary. She might be very handsome without bearing a comparison with you!"

"I suppose you mean to say something flattering, Rupert, but you have misunderstood me. Cyrilla is not at all what is called handsome."

"I thought as much," said Rupert; "so after all she is a rosy-cheeked fair-haired girl, such as one sees by dozens all over the world."

"You will not easily find a dozen Cyrillas," said Melanie; "Wilhelm says she only wants a pair of wings to make her an angel."

"The President said so! Then she must, after all, be something very uncommon."

"Only wait until you hear her sing."

"O, I am prepared for all sorts of accomplishments," cried Rupert, laughing; "I have heard enough of my aunt Sophy's system of education to expect wonders."

"And yet," said Melanie, "all the instruction

in the world, without natural talent, is of little use. Even the short time I was in Salzburg enabled me to discover that the same pains, and the same instruction bestowed on different characters and capabilities, produce quite different results. Fernanda possesses acquirements—Cyrilla accomplishments.”

“A nice distinction,” observed Rupert; “but I should have required more than one day to make the discovery.”

“And yet it was evident enough,” rejoined Melanie, “though among the crowd of people collected at my aunt’s, the evening I was there, I doubt if one person among them was aware of the difference,—in fact, the most of the company seemed to think the astonishing rapidity with which Fernanda’s fingers flew from one end of the pianoforte to the other much more admirable than Cyrilla’s faultless performance of a ‘song without words;’ and in vocal music, if they gave her the preference, it was because she sang our national melodies, which they understood better than Italian.”

“Most probably she has a good natural voice,” said Rupert: “our uncle Carl might have been a *primo tenore*.”

“Cyrilla’s voice scarcely seems to belong to this world,” said Melanie enthusiastically; “and the manner in which she accompanies herself is quite

indescribable,—so playful, so melancholy, and at times so deeply passionate.”

“You are exciting my curiosity,” said Rupert: “but I must make allowance for some poetical license in the description.”

“No,” said Melanie, seriously, “it is but truth; and the more I learn to appreciate her accomplishments, the more I regret the youthful rebellion which deprived me of such advantages in education.”

“You have educated yourself after a very pleasant fashion,” said Rupert, “and I don’t think my aunt would ever have been able to have pedagogued you into being other than you are; but you seem to like her better than you did when we last spoke of her,—what has caused the change?”

“I fear,” said Melanie with a sigh, “I greatly fear she is dying. You never saw such a spectre, and neither Fernanda nor Cyrilla seemed to perceive it, so gradual has most probably been the decay. I had not courage to contradict or even expostulate with her, although her opinions on a very important subject, with regard to Cyrilla, are diametrically opposed to mine.”

“Videlicet, marriage,” said Rupert: “so you have been informed of their plan; but it will be very unlike you if you join them, and, moreover, perfectly useless, I can assure you.”

"I know of no plan; but from what my aunt said I see she thinks that Cyrilla's want of fortune ought to induce her to marry from motives of interest; and she has not only inculcated this principle, but in the most systematic manner has repressed every inclination to more exalted sentiments,—has endeavoured to banish every idea that is not absolutely saturated with worldly wisdom from the minds of both her daughters!"

"You don't say so?" cried Rupert with forced seriousness: "actually saturated with worldly wisdom; and you discovered all this in twenty-four hours!"

"My aunt," said Melanie, "seemed to think it her duty to impress on my mind the necessity of Cyrilla's making a judicious marriage,—she talked of nothing else, and I listened to all she said on the subject in silence, but determined, even while she was speaking, that through me a new and ideal world should be opened to my sister."

"And so," said Rupert, "you are of course working as hard as you can at your favourite Jean Paul?"

"We have begun to read his works together; but the vein of poetical humour which pervades everything he has written is almost lost upon her. In the story of *Siebenkaes* the parts I most admired made no impression; and when I asked her yesterday what had pleased her most, she said it

was the description of Siebenkaes sitting with his young wife in the evening intending to write, and desiring her to snuff the candle for him : sometimes she snuffed it too close, and sometimes she forgot to snuff it at all, and at length, instead of thinking of his writing, he became altogether occupied with his wife and the snuffers ! ”

“ It is odd enough,” said Rupert, “ but that little scene, on account of its extreme simplicity, made a lasting impression on me too.”

“ You ! ” exclaimed Melanie ; “ but who ever expected anything else from you ? With your manner and appearance, no one would give you credit for half the feeling which I know you to possess ; but that Cyrilla, with her angelic face and ethereal figure, should, by an absurd prejudice of her mother’s, be made absolutely commonplace and prosaical, is, I must say, provoking ! I expected a congenial spirit, and find a light-hearted girl quite disposed to join Wilhelm in laughing at me.”

“ I think, after all, I may like her,” said Rupert.

“ Of course you will ; every one must like her. I quite idolize her already ; and am almost sure that, with much of her father’s indomitable gaiety, she has inherited his strong feelings also, and that there is a latent spark of romance in her nature which only requires time and judicious treatment to burst into flame ! ”

"Allow me," said Rupert, "to point out to you how much better it would be to leave Cyrilla as she is, free from all sorts of fires or flames. Now, don't be offended," he added, as Melanie turned away from him with a gesture of annoyance; "don't be offended, but listen to my entreaty that you will leave Cyrilla to work out her own scheme of happiness without any interference on your part; and above all things let her be natural, for though you are very charming as an original, a copy, especially if it were a juvenile one, and without your fund of information to draw upon, would be the *ne plus ultra* of absurdity."

"There is much more danger of Cyrilla's being unhappy than absurd," said Melanie. "Fancy such a creature as she is married to a man who cannot or will not participate in the joys and sorrows that chequer this life—who is not capable of understanding what love, pure ideal love is, no, not even by name—who....."

"Halt!" cried Rupert, taking up his sabre and beginning to buckle it on with affected haste; "if you have got on the subject of ideal love, we had better end our conversation. But before I go, I really must beg of you either to spare Cyrilla the description of your ideal love, or to tell her honestly that, though you talked in the same way twelve years ago, and sentimentalized with my poor tutor Englmann until his sorrows were little

inferior to those of Werther, you actually afterwards in his very presence bestowed your fair hand on his Excellency Count Falkenstein. Let her at least know that one can talk in this way and act in another."

"Rupert, you are unkind to speak so lightly of my first, my only love—the morning-star of my existence, which, however the glare of day may diminish in lustre, still, believe me, moves along the firmament of my memory, and becomes visible in all the darker moments of my life!"

Rupert coughed slightly and covered his mouth to conceal a smile: he always did so when he either knew or suspected his cousin of adapting the poetical ideas of others to her own use. She understood what he meant, and continued more rationally: "Heaven knows I would have married Valentine Englmann if we had had enough between us to supply the common necessities of life; but you must remember that I was portionless, and"

"My dear Melanie, do not for a moment suppose that I blame you; you acted wisely in every sense of the word. Englmann would have been miserable, and you still more so."

"No, Rupert, no. Never were two beings more congenial in mind, never was love based more truly on sentiment and a mysterious combination of spirits."

"Very Platonic," said Rupert, making an odd grimace; "but I would rather not hear you talk about that."

"And why not? Do not the Swedenborgians say that the spirit in another world meeting a congenial spirit can unite itself, and"

"Never mind what they say," cried Rupert, interrupting her. "It was in this world, twelve years ago, that you wished to unite yourself to a very good-looking and talented young man, but he being poor and ignoble you were not allowed to do so—fortunately for him and for yourself; for what sort of a parson's wife would you have made after all, Melanie? Only imagine yourself now at Windhorst with half-a-dozen obstreperous children!"

"I should have liked to have had children," said Melanie, sighing.

"Yes, little counts and countesses, perhaps, with plenty of French *bonnes*, and nurserymaids to take care of them, but not a pack of turbulent boys who must be washed and dressed with your own hands every morning. Instead of your rose-coloured boudoir, fancy the well-scoured parlour that would be your sitting-room, with no possible escape from these children, who, though very well behaved, all things considered, still, like all such animals, scream, shout, quarrel, ride on sticks, upset the furniture, blow their noses awry"

"You describe so graphically, Rupert," cried

Melanie, laughing, "that one would almost imagine you had experienced all this."

"So I have; but you know I rather like noise, and am very fond of children. Whenever I am at Windhorst, the whole Englmann family come to me, and you have no idea how gay they make the old place, or how they enjoy themselves, chasing each other through the large rooms and passages. I have more children than dogs with me when I go out to walk, and am not half as much discomposed as their father when they grow troublesome or tired. You never saw a fellow so put out as Englmann when he has been obliged to carry home a child!"

"A man of such exalted and refined ideas" began Melanie.

"Ah, bah! when a man marries and has six children, he should not mind carrying one of them occasionally; but, with the exception of a little remnant of over-refinement, he is the pleasantest companion possible."

"I heard," said Melanie, "that you had improved his house, and assisted him in various ways."

"I believe the best way to assist him is through his children," said Rupert; "so I have sent his eldest boy to school."

"O, Rupert, how kind of you! How I wish I could do something for him—I mean for them!"

“You can,” said Rupert, “and you can oblige me at the same time, if you will find out all about the different girls’ schools at Strasburg. Englmann’s wife has consented to part with her eldest daughter also; so, next autumn, after you have made the necessary inquiries about religion, and morals, and all the other things, we can send her off too. I was laughed at enough concerning my godson Rupert; but if I were to begin again with Rupertina, as they have barbarously christened her, there would be no end to the joke.”

“You may depend on my writing to Madame Joubert to-morrow,” said Melanie. “You know she has now the management of the school at which I passed eight years of my life.....But do you know I should like to follow your example, and do something for these children, if you think it would not be disagreeable to *him*.....I might adopt one of them—I wonder I never thought of that before! Wilhelm would have no objection, I am sure.....tell me, are any of the younger ones pretty or interesting-looking, like their father?”

“They are all strong healthy children, but I cannot recollect that any of them can justly make pretensions to beauty. Fritz is well enough, but you would think his eyes too small, and his mouth too large.”

“Oh, I don’t like boys at all—I meant one of the girls.”

"There is but one other girl, little Tony; she is not in the least pretty, but the merriest, oddest little thing you ever saw. The best plan would be for you to go with me to Windhorst for a day or two, and judge for yourself. You have not seen Englmann for twelve years; a meeting might be very conducive to your happiness."

"No, Rupert, it would be a renewal of grief."

"I am quite convinced, Melanie, that seeing him as he now is, the hard-working father of six children, with a voluminous white cravat instead of an open shirt collar,—a very long-tailed coat instead of the picturesque velvet garment of his student days,—a well shaved patient-looking face instead of the mustachioed demi-poetical countenance, which I can still dimly remember, would deprive your recollections of so much of their romance that you would be a happier woman during the rest of your life."

"O, Rupert, I would not see him so for all the world—would not destroy my ideal of all that is noble, poetical, beautiful! O, why have you dimmed the light that so brightly illumined my early days, and even by reflection chased the shadows of the present!"

"Because I want to chase away these imaginary shadows, and I think the patient face and long-tailed coat will greatly assist me."

"But why did you say that he wore a long-tailed coat?" asked Melanie, reproachfully.

“Because he does—just think of him always as I have now described him, and the President will rise enormously in your estimation.”

“The President—Wilhelm—I had almost forgotten. This is the anniversary of our wedding-day, and I wrote some verses to remind him of it; he must have found them on the table when he returned from his walk.”

She moved towards a door leading into an adjoining room and softly opened it. The President was seated at a table covered with papers, pamphlets, and writing materials; the concentrated light of a shaded lamp fell on a number of business-like letters, and he was so engaged shoving them into their envelopes, that he did not hear his wife's step as she approached him. He was a tall, pale-complexioned, strongly built man, his head, large in its proportions, was but sparingly covered with silver-grey hair which did not conceal any part of his high intellectual forehead; beneath his thick and still dark eyebrows were clear light grey eyes, the usual expression of which denoted the earnestness of deep thought, not unfrequently verging on severity; his nose, large and inclining to aquiline, suited well his firmly closing mouth and square-formed chin; his manners were decided, almost haughty; his voice, deep and sonorous, was seldom heard in light discourse; he was a man more calculated to inspire respect, perhaps fear, than love,

and such had been the case. There was a painful degree of uncertainty, almost diffidence, in Melanie's manner as she approached him, and whispered rather than said, "Wilhelm, did you not find—something—on your table?"

"A pink-papered perfumed piece of poetry!" he answered, taking up a pen and beginning to write the addresses of his letters. "The fact is, Melanie, I have had such a multiplicity of affairs, that I have not had time to read it."

She stretched out her arm with a look of deep mortification to regain possession of the lines, which she felt were disparaged by his alliteration; but he laid his hand on hers, saying, "Don't be offended, it shall be read the moment I have despatched these letters to the minister; this is my last night here you know, and everything must be in order before I leave this table. I really should be obliged if you would read it for me, or tell me the contents while I seal these papers;" and he lit a taper and began to drop the melting wax, as she turned away, saying,—

"O, it was merely to remind you that this was the anniversary of our wedding-day; it is of no consequence!"

He first pressed his massive seal firmly on the wax, and then turning suddenly round, exclaimed, "But it is of great consequence; why did you not tell me before I went out to walk—I could then

have gone to a jeweller's, and bought you some trinket."

Melanie coloured violently, and turning to Rupert, who stood in the doorway, she said, in a voice trembling from vexation, "Such are my trials, Rupert; you may laugh at them, but—they are very hard to be borne by any one whose feelings are not quite blunted."

"Now, don't be absurd, Melanie," said Count Falkenstein, holding out his hand; "I never could make speeches such as you like to hear, but I am happy to be able to say, that, all things considered, we have worked on very well together these twelve years, and I trust much rational happiness is still in store for us. Next time, take care to let me know the day before, that"

"That you may buy me some trinket," she said, interrupting him.

"I meant to say brooches and bracelets—you are fond of such things I know."

"Believe me that, so bestowed, they have as little value for me.....as pink-papered perfumed poetry for you!"

"Severe, but just," said the President, half laughing. "Now, Melanie, don't be vexed—see, I am going to do a little sentiment for you; until such time as my letters are sealed and despatched, (for business must ever go before pleasure,) your lines shall remain here—in my waistcoat pocket—

just over my heart you see—could any reasonable woman desire more?"

Melanie half smiled.

"Where are you going this evening?" he asked, evidently trying to appear interested about her plans; but he continued writing while he added, "That yellow satin petticoat is perfectly dazzling, and you look uncommonly handsome!"

"Cyrilla is to be presented to the Crown Princess," answered Melanie, walking towards a pier glass in order to remove carefully the tears which had gathered in her eyes. A bronze clock commenced striking the hour, the carriage was announced, and a moment after Cyrilla appeared. Rupert sprang towards her, but accustomed to punctuality in time, she only glanced towards her sister, and then hurried down the stairs. As he followed with Melanie, he asked where he should be likely to meet them in the course of the evening. "We are going to the theatre, and afterwards to the Polinskys."

"*Au revoir*, then," cried Rupert gaily; "if I have time I shall be sure to see you again."

The few hours, however, which intervened sufficed to renew all his distrust, and increase his repugnance to a nearer acquaintance with his cousin Cyrilla; so, though curiosity induced him even at a late hour to follow her to the Polinskys, he stationed himself silently near the door of the room in which

she was sitting, and contemplated her at what he considered a safe distance. He saw a fair, a very fair girl, youthful-looking to a degree that made the calm nonchalance of her manner remarkable, as she leaned back in a large low crimson chair, quite surrounded by men of various ages, and apparently able to amuse or interest them all. Rupert mistook the ease of habit for coquetry, and muttered, "This is another accomplishment, I suppose; and she has got the start of Melanie here too, without being half as handsome. How could my aunt imagine I should fall in love with that baby face!"

Rupert was himself still too young to appreciate the rounded cheek, the full lip, the eye of which the white is almost blue—the innumerable charms of extreme youth: Melanie's tall full figure, brilliant eyes, and marked regular features, were to him more interesting; and he would perhaps have approached her if he had not suspected, from the wondering faces of those around her, that she was talking either of animal magnetism or ghosts, two subjects which he particularly disliked. Again he looked at Cyrilla, but she had turned away her head; and after a moment's indecision, he walked slowly, almost cautiously, away, as if he feared his cousin might see him and claim his attention. "For, of course," he thought, "she has got all possible in-

structions from her mother and aunt how to catch and hold me fast."

"You don't mean to leave so early, Adlerkron," cried Captain Stauffen, one of the officers of his regiment; "surely you will wait to hear your cousin sing: if she can do so half as well as she can talk, it is well worth your while."

"Show yourself, at least," said Lieutenant Klemmhain, taking him by the arm; "become visible to the Polinskys, if only for a moment, as I heard the Countess Falkenstein say that her sister must not sing until you had made your appearance."

"Indeed! Then," said Rupert, with a look of intense annoyance, "you may go to her now, and tell her that I have just recollected a most important engagement, which unfortunately will prevent me from hearing my cousin sing just now, but that in a few weeks I hope to see them both at Exfort."

Rupert stood in the street—his carriage was gone, and the cold half-thawed snow penetrated the soles and sides of his thin boots: he stopped and deliberated whether or not he should return; "No, he would not. After all, Melanie *did* know, or at least suspect the plot against him; it showed great want of tact her saying that Cyrilla must wait until he came—his aunts would find her but a bungling matchmaker—and as to Cyrilla, the sooner

her hopes were crushed the better; it was his duty to be decided on this occasion."

And he strode down the street, splashing through the wet snow, alike unheedful of it or of the "still small voice" that whispered he was not acting with his usual kindness or consideration for the feelings of others.

CHAPTER VIII.

EXFORT is one of those ancient towns so numerous in Germany, which, from having occupied a distinguished place in the early history of the country, and been deemed worthy of fortification in the middle ages, has had to endure all the vicissitudes of the endless wars of those times. Besieged, pillaged, burnt, it had ever risen, phoenix-like out of its ashes; and even the last conflagration, and having been twice sacked by the French at a later period, had failed to deprive it of the appearance of a large, populous, and thriving town, though the distance from the coast, and want of a navigable river or extensive commerce, would cause many an Englishman to doubt the fact. The town had, at the conclusion of the last war, been greatly enlivened, in the opinion of its inhabitants, by the old residences of various historically celebrated Margraves and Gau-graves having been converted into barracks for a numerous and oval garrison, and

also considerably elevated in rank, when it became the seat of a provincial government, with its respectable representatives of civil power, in the persons of assessors, councillors of different classes, &c., &c., &c., and a President!

The President, Count Falkenstein, resided in the government house, which was the largest and handsomest in the town, occupying the whole side of a square called the Platz, and, though the lower part of the building was altogether appropriated to the different offices of the persons employed under him, the second story, with its long suite of reception rooms, had been reserved altogether for his use, or rather for his wife's, who there, on stated evenings, received, sometimes a select, sometimes a promiscuous society.

Placed by station and fortune in the first rank, Melanie affected to laugh at and despise all social distinctions: she said, and tried to believe, that talent and education alone could raise man above his fellows; but she never was known to transgress any of the self-imposed laws which distinguished her class. She spoke French, or demi-French, almost invariably when in company, *tutored* and called familiarly by their Christian names every member of her own *coterie*, while she was unnecessarily and ostentatiously polite to the less fashion-favoured members of her little world. She aspired

in a lady-like sort of way to literary celebrity, and on first coming to Exfort had entertained the idea of combining learning and fashion, and altogether changing the tastes and pursuits of the greater number of her acquaintances. Some years had elapsed since the time of the "three experiments," as she herself laughingly called the three soirées in which she had hoped to commence a new era in the Exfort world. To this end, she had signified her intention of giving reading parties, and had induced men of learning and talent to write and read aloud essays on subjects which she judged most appropriate, and likely to arouse the curiosity or engage the attention of her expected audience. The first night her rooms were crowded to suffocation, but the company were manifestly soon weary, and openly showed that they preferred whispering to each other. Some ridiculed what they had heard, others were honest enough to confess that they had not understood what it was all about; but a still greater number declared that it was intolerably dull work, and if they had not been ashamed, they would have gone home at the end of the first half hour; and this sort of shame induced many to appear at the second soirée, but the third was literally without guests. Melanie's hopes of being the leader of an intellectual society evaporated, and she henceforward followed the example of others, giving two or

three large balls during the winter, and receiving those who had general invitations to her house twice-a-week in spring and autumn.

At the end of the long suite of reception-rooms was one chosen for constant habitation, because it adjoined the private office of Count Falkenstein. He reserved for himself the privilege of locking the double doors between them when he did not choose to be interrupted in writing, or of opening them when he either wished for society or desired to lengthen his space for walking. The day after Cyrilla's arrival, as she was sitting in this room with her sister, waiting for the announcement of dinner, she heard the President speaking with unusual animation to some one who had entered just as the doors of communication had been opened. Melanie instantly rose and joined them, and Cyrilla soon after distinguished the low tones of an unknown voice inquiring for her cousin Rupert, and asking if he did not mean to come soon to Exfort about the purchase of Freilands.

"I really do not know what his intentions are," replied Melanie in rather an offended tone; "his conduct was altogether so odd, so inexplicable, that even if I had had an opportunity of asking him, I do not think I should have done so."

"I heard you talking to him for a good half-hour," said the President; "but," he added ironi-

cally, "I suppose he forgot to ask about the new work which is now in manuscript."

"It was not to me he was so—so uncivil, I may say; it was his neglect of Cyrilla that annoyed me. He saw her for five minutes before she went out the last evening we were in Berlin,—promised to follow us to the Polinskys, but when there, never even took the trouble of entering the room we were in; and ended by sending a young officer of his regiment to tell me that he had some engagement which would prevent him from hearing her sing! I naturally thought he would have excused himself the next morning before we left, but he never appeared."

"We left very early," suggested the President.

"That," said the unknown voice, "is no excuse for Adlerkron. You know he is one of those men who do not know how to enjoy either their position in the world or their wealth; he is, and always was, an earlier riser than most of those unfortunate beings who, like me, are doomed to earn their daily bread."

"I think, Edouard," said the President, "that in his place you would have been equally energetic. I am convinced that, under any circumstances, you would be an ambitious and studious man."

"Studious! yes—perhaps—but with Adler-

kron's fortune I should certainly lead a very different life from his."

"As to his life," said Melanie, "it is, I am told, blameless; and though I feel a little angry with him just now on account of Cyrilla, I must say I have seldom met a more generous or good-natured being."

"O, only too good-natured," said the same voice. "If I were in his place, the officers of my regiment should not ride my horses without asking my leave; nor should they have free quarters at Windhorst. I consider that sort of good-nature weakness."

"He is extremely popular," began Melanie.

"He is considered a good-natured fellow, and perhaps that is the height of his ambition, but it is not mine."

"And what *is* your ambition?" asked Melanie.

"Nothing less than to be finance minister some twenty years hence!"

"You are right, Edouard," cried the President; "if circumstances favour your views, I know no one whose talents would more fit them for the office."

"In the meantime," said Melanie, walking into the drawing-room, "let me introduce you to my sister. Cyrilla, this is our nephew, Count Zorn-dorff."

He was a young and uncommonly handsome man ; the extreme paleness of his features rendered still more remarkable by his jet black hair and large dark eyes ; his manners were quiet, his voice low, and peculiarly agreeable. Though perfectly well dressed, there was an evident carelessness in the minutiae of his toilet which most people thought and said proceeded from the consciousness that his personal advantages permitted negligence. Those who so judged were in error. Few, none perhaps, understood his character at all, for few or none ever study the characters of those with whom they are not obliged to live ; and many, very many, pass through this world without ever having studied any character at all, merely taking people as they find them, and feeling a sort of vague surprise when others act differently from what they would have done in their places. These are like children turning over the leaves of a book of prints, under which the explanations are written in a language unknown to them. The representations of scenes of domestic life they can understand, though even there much is passed over unnoticed ; but should the picture present anything new or uncommon, after having looked at it for a short time with a mixture of curiosity and wonder, they turn over the leaf, unconscious of the fund of deep interest, or subject of profound thought, which they

have lost. The study of character may be compared to the acquirement of a new science or language; the more cultivated the mind, the less felt are the first difficulties; and these once overcome, a world of hitherto unknown ideas come crowding on us, or intellectual treasures are within our reach which may afford us occupation and enjoyment for the rest of our lives. This digression is not intended as a prelude to a dissection of Count Zorndorff's head or heart: like Cyrilla, we will see him as he chose to appear to her, and that was, cold and indifferent. He talked politics without intermission during dinner, retired afterwards with the President to his study; and when he again appeared in the drawing-room, he addressed all his conversation in a half-whisper to Melanie.

The President requested Cyrilla to sing; and while he leaned back in his chair, an expression of perfect satisfaction stealing over his stern features, Count Zorndorff ceased speaking, but, bending over a book, appeared altogether unconscious of all that was going on about him. As the clock struck ten, he rose, nodded a good-night to his uncle, murmured a few words to his aunt, and, slightly bowing to Cyrilla, left the room.

"Well," cried Melanie, turning with a look of half-suppressed triumph to her sister: "well, Cyrilla, what do you think of him?"

"You mean Count Zorndorff? I hardly know—I spoke so little to him—he seems gentleman-like."

"My dear creature, are you blind? He is probably the handsomest man you ever saw in your life!"

"Very likely; but I did not observe him attentively."

The President looked up and smiled. "Edouard has for once made no impression," he said quietly; "Cyrilla is too rational to waste admiration on a head, without knowing what sort of brain may be in it. I believe it is Plato who says 'mind alone is beautiful.'"

"He meant, that the appreciation of beauty depends upon the mind," said Melanie; "and the more intellect we have.....the stronger our imagination may be.....so much the more intense is the perception of the beautiful! I must say, Cyrilla, I never saw any one so devoid of feeling for beauty as you are!"

"I think on the present occasion it is a most fortunate circumstance," said Count Falkenstein."

"I cannot agree with you, Wilhelm; it is a loss of incalculable pleasure a person not having a perception of what is beautiful, be the object picture, statue, man, or woman."

"Hum.....," said Count Falkenstein, rubbing

his chin. "The perception of a woman's beauty is sometimes necessary to make a man overlook her foibles."

Melanie moved in silent dignity towards a marble table, on which three small antique silver candlesticks were placed, and began to occupy herself in lighting the candles they held.

"I think," said Cyrilla, apologetically, "indeed I am almost sure I should have observed Count Zorndorff more had he spoken to me, or had he appeared to like music."

"Edouard loses 'incalculable pleasure' by having no ear for music," said Count Falkenstein.

"He has no dislike to vocal music," cried Melanie, eagerly; "no dislike whatever when he can hear the words distinctly."

"That is," said the Count, "he has no objection to receiving a poetical idea even through the medium of song!"

"I think, Wilhelm, it is extremely injudicious your endeavouring to prejudice Cyrilla against a person with whom she must associate so constantly."

"And I think, Melanie, it is still more injudicious your endeavouring to prepossess her in favour of a person who is.....is a.....is decidedly the worst *parti* in Exfort."

Cyrilla laughed. "To relieve both your minds,"

she said, "let me assure you that I am neither prejudiced nor prepossessed, nor," she added with a slight blush, "nor have I come to Exfort to look for a *parti*."

"Well," said the President, "all I have to say is, that I hope you have made as little impression on my nephew as he seems to have made on you. It is a fortunate circumstance for him that his heart is not as vulnerable through his ears as mine."

"You need have no apprehensions on Edouard's account," observed Melanie, "for, however Cyrilla's appearance might attract him, she is not in other respects at all suited to him. I have seldom seen two people so different in disposition."

"So much the better," rejoined Count Falkenstein, "so much the better; but you see sometimes people like those who are precisely the contrary of what they are themselves—I give myself as an example. Can any two people in the world be more unlike than we are?"

"I flatter myself that it is not possible," answered Melanie as she left the room.

Cyrilla stopped at her sister's door for a moment and said, "I should like to know why you never mentioned Count Zorndorff's name to me. I had no idea that you had a nephew here."

"He has not been long in Exfort," answered Melanie evasively, "only since he became *Kammer*

Assessor. Our other nephews, the Falkensteins, are not to be compared to him; but they will nevertheless inherit all we possess, while poor Edouard must work his way on in the world as he best can. It is this which makes him so melancholy—so discontented—at times almost a misanthrope.”

“But,” said Cyrilla, “how many men in this world are similarly situated, without being either melancholy or misanthropical!”

“Very likely; but not such men as Edouard. I never see him and Rupert together, without wishing they could change places: Rupert’s simple habits and thoughtless hilarity are perfectly adapted to a life of the commonest description; whereas Edouard’s refinement, almost amounting to morbid sensibility, will make him, if chance or interest do not favour his ambition, the most wretched of men!”

“Good-night,” said Cyrilla, turning away; “you have quite convinced me that he is not at all likely to suit me, even as an acquaintance.....and I suppose he is here every day?”

“He is here every day, and you will be so unavoidably thrown together, that I wrote to him about you from Berlin.....I will be candid with you, dear Cyrilla, and tell you that your appearance is so ideal, so essentially poetical and refined, that I trembled for his peace of mind, and.....”

“And,” said Cyrilla, interrupting her, “and recommended him to be almost uncivil to me? He ought to be very much obliged to you for your care of his happiness. May I ask why you did not think it necessary to warn me too?”

“Your education,” answered Melanie, “must have been very different from what I supposed, if you could waste a serious thought on any one in his circumstances. I am sure you have received ample instruction on this subject.”

“Perhaps so,” replied Cyrilla; “but there are some things I have not been able to learn, and this happens to be one of them. Mamma and Fernanda used to discuss such matters occasionally before me, and talked very rationally and wisely no doubt.....but I—would rather like to believe that there is such a thing as.....love.....in this world.”

“There is—there is!” cried Melanie enthusiastically. “There is, and no wealth or station can supply its place. Oh, Cyrilla, if you would not lead a life of endless regrets, never let any thing tempt you to marry a man without feeling, and being assured that he also feels for you that description of love which alone is genuine,—a love inspired by congeniality of mind! Love deserves not the name if it be not based on sentiment, and elevated by a mysterious combination of spirits! Good-night, dearest,” she added hastily retreating

into her room; "I hear Wilhelm already in his dressing-room. To-morrow we will discuss this important question more at length."

"Melanie is very—very sentimental," thought Cyrilla, as she walked towards her room, "but she is very charming also. Poor thing! I know she was persuaded to marry the President without caring for him, and I now begin to suspect she liked some one else better. I wish I could see the letter she wrote to that Count Zorndorff; it must have made a great impression on him, for, after the first rather disagreeable steady stare, he never again looked at me the whole evening."

CHAPTER IX.

DAYS and weeks passed—Cyrilla's friends and acquaintances multiplied with that facility so common to youth—so impossible in later years. In many houses, where she found companions of her own age, she became intimate, and was not a little annoyed occasionally at the number of questions which were asked her about her cousin Rupert—If he did not intend to purchase Freilands?—Had he not said he would retire from the army and settle near Exfort?—Whom did she suppose he was likely to marry?—Did she not think him quite a love?—Had she ever heard any amateur sing so well as he did? &c., &c., &c. And not one of these questions, simple as they were, could she answer, though they concerned one of her nearest relations. Rupert's neglect was thus made so very apparent, that she first felt piqued, then almost angry, when-

ever he was named. Some of her other friends were not less curious concerning the intentions and movements of Count Zorndorff, who they knew almost lived in his uncle's house; and it was in vain that Cyrilla assured them that she was scarcely acquainted with and never spoke to him; they were incredulous, and well they might be, for on the evenings that the Countess Falkenstein was "at home," they had observed that he followed her from room to room, stood near her, listened to what she said, occasionally joined in the conversation, and all with that appearance of careless intimacy which men, who have lived in the world, know so well how to assume towards very young women; but none could know, nor could Cyrilla explain, that when they met the next day at dinner a relapse had taken place, and he was again frigid or indifferent to her, and exclusively occupied with his uncle and aunt.

One afternoon, as he sat in the drawing-room with his arms crossed, apparently in deepest reverie, Melanie approached Cyrilla, who was painting in water-colours, and pointing to Zorndorff, asked her to make a sketch of him. "It will not be difficult," she added, "as he is so quiet—he has not moved for the last ten minutes."

"Oh, nothing can be easier," said Cyrilla gaily; "he is quite a man of marble—unmoved—immov-

able. I can sketch his face without looking at him—Look here—so ?”

Melanie bent over her, exclaiming, “Excellent ! nothing could be more like ! What an extraordinary talent for taking likenesses you must have !”

“I believe,” said Cyrilla, as she carelessly gave the outline of the figure, “I believe this is rather an exercise of memory—Shall I colour the head a little ?”

“Oh pray do.”

In the meantime the man of marble was sitting upright, his pale cheek slightly flushed, his dark eyes flashing, and an expression of surprise and pleasure pervading every feature of his face.

“I think,” suggested Melanie, “you might give a *little* more colour.”

“Not a bit,” said Cyrilla decidedly.

“I liked your sketch better,” continued Melanie ; “the outline was perfect.”

“It is there still,” rejoined Cyrilla ; “this slight washing in of colour cannot have changed it.”

“It is there and not there,” said Melanie ; “you have given a cold, haughty, discontented expression to the head now.”

“’Tis memory’s sketch,” said Cyrilla, throwing down her pencil ; “and it is so,” she added, slightly shrugging her shoulders, “that Count Zorndorff’s head appears to me—almost—always.”

Melanie walked with the drawing in her hand into the next room to show it to the President. Count Zorndorff rose, approached Cyrilla, sat down in a chair beside her, and having watched her for a few minutes, as she replaced her colours and deposited her pallets in the box, he observed, in his usual low well modulated voice, "I am sorry my head has made so disagreeable an impression on you, Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron; will you allow me to accuse you of some injustice in your judgment of me?"

"Of your head—not of you."

"My head! why that's myself—my all—all I have in the world! My head, with some mechanical assistance on the part of my hands, must earn my bread, give me clothes—a roof to cover me, and perhaps some of those luxuries which civilisation has rendered almost necessary to life!"

"We spoke merely of the expression of your features," observed Cyrilla.

"You said I appeared to you cold and haughty," continued Zorndorff; "I am neither the one nor the other."

"Very likely," said Cyrilla, playing with her pencil, "it may be the regularity of your features which gives them an expression of severity."

"I am not severe, not haughty, and but too surely not cold." Had Cyrilla looked at him, she

would have believed the latter assertion at least ; she did not, and he continued : “ Cold ! As cold as Hecla under its crust of ice ! To the charge of discontent I plead guilty.”

“ Melanie calls it melancholy, and the word sounds better,” observed Cyrilla, smiling.

“ Let us call it by the right name—discontent. I am altogether dissatisfied with myself, my lot in life—in short, with the whole world.”

“ And I find such discontent so unreasonable, that, instead of commiserating, I feel inclined to laugh at you ; and would do so if I knew you well enough,” said Cyrilla, moving back her chair.

“ Stay, Mademoiselle d’Adlerkron, one moment You said, or implied that I..... or, if you will my *head*, was not always disagreeable to you.”

“ Did I ? I suppose I meant, that in society you looked more amiable than you do for us every day here.”

“ You could scarcely make a remark calculated to place me in a more disadvantageous light ; and it is not altogether without foundation, nor without cause. With you the case is exactly the contrary ; you are a thousand times more charming, a thousand times more fascinating, when we are quite alone than when you are seen in a crowd.

“ Your words admit of a double sense,” said

Cyrilla, laughing; "you may mean that I am a cheerful sort of person, with whom it is pleasant to pass a few hours every day, or....."

"Pleasant! Oh, something more than pleasant."

"Or you may mean that I am too insignificant to be observed among others."

"You are lost, or rather thrown away, like an exotic flower in a gardener's table-bouquet," said Zorndorff, with increasing animation. "One never can admire a flower as it deserves, until it is seen alone. A rosebud for instance is, with all its intrinsic beauty, a flower but little observed when, with jessamines, jonquils, geraniums, and dozens of others, it composes a part of those pyramidical bouquets which gardeners love to form.....I never see one of them without thinking of a ball-room—I am never in a ball-room without thinking of a bouquet."

"A very nice idea," said Cyrilla, leaning back in her chair, half amused, half indifferent.

"In looking at a bouquet of this description," continued Zorndorff, "one seldom singles out a flower for particular admiration." He paused a moment, and then added, "Let me, however, take one—a rosebud, a lily, or what you will, and let me place it in a glass of water; give me time to examine and admire it at leisure, and I shall soon think it most beautiful—most perfect—and wonder

that, even among the others, I had not instantly sought one like it."

"You are right," said Cyrilla; "all plants are beautiful when carefully examined; and," she said, bending over the paper before her, and almost unconsciously beginning to sketch rosebuds and lilies, "and really the whole idea is so poetical, that you might put it into verse."

"Are you laughing at me?" he asked, calmly.

"No, I was only thinking of what Melanie told me a few days ago."

"What did she tell you?"

"That you had written some delightfully wild, despairing poems, and published them under a feigned name."

"A youthful folly that I hoped had been forgotten," said Zorndorff, smiling.

"She said also," continued Cyrilla, archly, "that you could talk poetical prose sometimes."

"That was not my intention just now," said Zorndorff, rising; "but if you cannot, or will not, understand my allegory, let me tell you, in plain words, that however safe I may imagine myself when I see you surrounded by others, you might become dangerous to my peace of mind were I to yield to the inclination I constantly feel of conversing unrestrainedly with you."

Cyrilla looked at him for a moment in astonish-

ment. Some confused thoughts of an ice-covered volcano, bouquets, ball-rooms, and buds of roses, passed through her mind—then came the tolerably clear idea that Count Zorndorff, the cold impenetrable man of marble, had not been, or was not so insensible, as she had supposed. A feeling of gratified vanity was succeeded by a smile of unequivocal pleasure, that changed into a merry laugh, in which she was joined by Zorndorff, even while he said, “I wish you would always laugh, and then I should have nothing to fear.”

“You would have nothing to fear!” repeated Melanie, joining them. “What on earth are you talking about?”

“I have been endeavouring to explain to your sister my motives for avoiding her society, and wish I could make her understand that I am not always the dull disagreeable fellow I have been for the last six weeks.”

“Dull and disagreeable! I am sure Cyrilla never thought.....”

“Excuse me, Melanie. I certainly did at least think your praises of Count Zorndorff a little exaggerated—that he was not dull, I could discover by his conversation with others; but, as far as I am concerned, I must say he is the only man I ever found actually ungracious to me, and.....and rather disagreeable than otherwise.”

"That was more than I intended," cried Zorndorff, with unusual warmth; "but a medium in such cases is not possible, and henceforth I will be—myself—such as I am."

"Edouard, dear Edouard," cried Melanie, with a look of alarm, "have you forgotten all I said to you?"

"No; I remember it perfectly, and some other things too; but it is absurd avoiding present pleasure from a vague fear that it may increase future misery. Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron shall never again have cause to complain of my ungraciousness."

The announcement of dinner ended the conversation, but Cyrilla's interest was excited, and the more so, as her sister's countenance assumed an unusual gravity. Zorndorff did not that day, or ever after, follow his uncle into his study, but joining Melanie and Cyrilla after dinner, read or talked to them the whole evening.

CHAPTER X.

ZORNDORFF'S explanation made a deep and lasting impression on Cyrilla, nor was his manner afterwards calculated to weaken it. If he did not positively seek her society, he at least never seemed to avoid it; and, when they were together, he talked naturally, and apparently without reserve, on every subject, allowing himself to be laughed at for his fastidious tastes, and listening gravely to her lectures on the influences of inordinate ambition. Too proud to be vain, he was evidently perfectly indifferent to his very uncommon personal advantages, and in proportion as Cyrilla observed this, she became aware of them, acquiring by degrees a sense of the "beautiful" which might even have satisfied her sister, had she thought proper again to question her. Day by day Zorndorff rose in her estimation—how could it be otherwise? The Pre-

sident consulted him on important business. Melanie's encomiums were unceasing, and they no longer appeared exaggerated to Cyrilla. In the society of Exfort, he was, by common consent, the leader of fashion, without having given himself the slightest trouble to obtain that eminence; and Cyrilla could not long remain unconscious that, even against his will, she had begun to "endanger his peace of mind." She pardoned, as every woman in her place would have done, the occasional glances that betrayed this secret—forgave him sooner than he did himself, and felt a degree of compassion for his magnanimous struggles that almost verged on tenderness. It was these same efforts on his part to overcome and conceal his growing admiration and regard that gave peculiar interest to their intercourse. She began to understand why he was discontented, and even to entertain vague wishes that she had been born an heiress; but it was not until he had been absent for some days in Berlin, that she discovered how extremely insipid all other men were—how very necessary his society must be to his aunt and uncle! Perhaps she was glad when he returned to Exfort. She gave him her hand for a moment, but it was singular that, as Melanie warmly welcomed him, and added the assurance that they had found it almost impossible to live without

him, Cyrilla said not one word, but, bending over her work, slightly averted her face, which had suddenly become flushed in a very unusual manner. Zorndorff was not at all hurt at her silence. On the contrary, a look of surprise was quickly followed by a smile of satisfaction, and a visible exhilaration of spirits, that lasted for some time.

"I saw your cousin Rupert very often," he observed, after a pause.

"Did you?" said Cyrilla, carelessly.

Zorndorff laughed. "I expected," he continued, "to have been stormed with questions about the movements of so very important a person."

"Important!" repeated Cyrilla; "I really was not aware of his importance."

"Why, is he not the head and hope of your family?" he asked ironically.

"That may give him importance in the eyes of my aunt in Salzburg; but, for my part"

"For your part," said Melanie, "I can easily imagine that a little common civility, a very slight show of regard when you were in Berlin, would have raised him in your opinion far more than all his possessions. I hope, Edouard, you gave him no information whatever about Cyrilla."

"He did not ask for any."

"You don't mean to say that he did not speak of us at all?"

“Not exactly ; he hoped you were all well, or something to that purport. You know, of course, that he has purchased Freilands, and intends to furnish the house magnificently.”

“I am in total ignorance of everything concerning him.”

“He will be here to-morrow to give you any information you may desire.”

“To-morrow !” repeated Melanie ; then, turning to her sister, she added, “Cyrilla, you will really do me a favour by endeavouring to be out of the way when he arrives—by avoiding him for a day or two.”

“I don’t think he will observe whether I am here or not,” said Cyrilla, half-laughing.

“But, Edouard, don’t you think we ought to punish him in some way for his neglect ?” asked Melanie.

“Yes ; but, if I may offer an opinion, I should say that a quiet system of indifference during his stay here would be better than avoiding him in any manner that would lead to explanations.”

“It is not easy to be indifferent with him—he is too good-natured ; and then, you know, he cannot endure the idea of having offended any one, and will be sure to explain or apologize in some queer way, or make us forget what he has done by doing something else.”

"Let us tell him at once how good-for-nothing we think him—how offended we are," suggested Cyrilla.

"He will misunderstand you," said Zorndorff, "and be persuaded you are making advances to him; indeed, if you do not carefully weigh all your actions and words, he will in all probability think you have serious intentions on his heart and hand."

"That is true," said Cyrilla; "I had forgotten that weakness of his."

"That folly!" said Zorndorff, with a slight sneer.

The President, who had entered the room while they were speaking, observed, "If you knew as much of Rupert as I do, you would excuse him for entertaining some fears of people having designs upon him: he has had a good deal of experience in that way. Edouard might have been able to give you information enough on the subject, if he had not just about that time been too much occupied with his own affairs—eh, Edouard?"

Zorndorff bit his lip, and murmured something about the love affairs of students being seldom of much importance.

"You must not say that, Edouard; we may hope there are exceptions, and that"

"Excuse me for interrupting you," said Zorn-

dorff, rising hastily; "but you have just reminded me that I have a long message for you from old Sommerfeld about the last loan in which he was concerned."

"A very natural transition," said Count Falkenstein; "but first tell me how the old man has borne his son's death."

"He is resigned, but looks ill, and remains for hours without speaking. His daughter is very uneasy about him."

"Sorry to hear it: her brother's death must have been a great shock to her in her delicate state of health."

"We—I mean she—has been expecting it nearly two years," said Zorndorff; "it was at last quite a release."

"But she seemed to me a person of such remarkably strong feelings"

"Oh yes, horribly strong feelings," said Zorndorff, shrugging his shoulders.

"Her fortune will now be immense," observed the President.

"It will," said Zorndorff; "but she cannot purchase health with it."

"I remember hearing something of these Sommerfelds," said Melanie: "bankers—enormously rich; but I never met them anywhere, did I?"

"Perhaps not; but their wealth makes them re-

markable enough, and it is now all centred in one woman," answered the President.

"I pity her," said Melanie; "any woman with a fortune sufficiently large to tempt adventurers is to be pitied: better to be penniless and have the certainty of being chosen for oneself alone!"

"And what is the use of being chosen if choice is out of *our* power?" asked Cyrilla, quietly. "I should not hesitate to take the fortune and my chance for happiness, if it were offered me. The relations of penniless women," she added, laughing, "are generally so unreasonable as to expect them to be satisfied with a house and home, and to take thankfully whatever they may find in it."

"The relations of men in the same predicament," said Zorndorff, "have not unfrequently the same idea."

"A man marrying from motives of interest is unpardonable," began Cyrilla.

"Not more so than a woman's doing so," cried Zorndorff, walking across the room to where she was sitting; "and moreover, he risks his happiness less than a woman in a similar case."

"He deserves to lose it altogether," rejoined Cyrilla; "for a man by application and industry can provide for himself and secure an independence; but what can we do?"

"I am afraid there is little doubt as to what

Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron will do," muttered Zorn-dorff, turning to his uncle with a forced smile.

"Let us hope," said the President gravely, "that in her case prudence and inclination may point to the same person."

The next day Rupert arrived. At Melanie's request, as he walked in at one door, Cyrilla disappeared through another. His visit was short and hurried; he promised to come again the next day, and—did not inquire for Cyrilla. Melanie's indignation was unbounded, Cyrilla blushed, Zorn-dorff laughed, the President asked what was the matter, but no one chose to explain. "It was not worth his notice—mere nonsense." Count Falkenstein did not like nonsense, and asked no further question. So profound was the respect entertained for him by all his household, that they never ventured to make him acquainted with any of those little domestic events and jests that, after all, make the sum of private life. Yet he was not an ill-tempered man or a tyrant, but so unbendingly master, that he was approached with reverence, spoken to with reserve, and—avoided as much as possible.

The day following, Cyrilla purposely and willingly went out, and Melanie received her cousin Rupert with a reserved dignity, which, however, was altogether unperceived by him. Provokingly unconscious of his disgrace, he walked about the room,

examining the books and turning over the music, until he seated himself at Cyrilla's drawing-table, and, in the contemplation of her sketches, remained for some time quite quiet.

"How well she draws!" he observed abruptly.

"Meaning Cyrilla?" asked Melanie.

"Exactly—where is she?"

"Gone out."

"When is she likely to return?"

"I don't know."

"Don't you? that's odd. Did you not tell her that I intended to come here to-day?"

"Of course; but—she had an engagement....."

"Really! not very important, most probably!"

"Why—no—it is precisely of the same description as yours the evening you had not time to speak to her in Berlin."

"Ah, she is offended with me!"

"Not as much as I should have been in her place, but quite enough to prevent her from feeling any *empressement* to see you."

"Oh, I don't want or wish for anything of that kind," said Rupert; "quite the contrary; but still, Melanie, I believe I had better dine with you to-day, and work out a reconciliation with her, or else she may refuse to go to Freilands."

"She has been there already: we got up a picnic on purpose to show it to her."

“ I don’t mean pic-nics,” said Rupert : “ I expect you all to come and stay with me,—the President can drive into Exfort every morning and return to dinner.”

“ But,” said Melanie with a smile, “ the furniture is a—of rather—too pastoral a description to admit of your receiving company. There are, I allow, garden chairs and deal tables in profusion, but.....”

Rupert laughed. “ Do not be alarmed, my dear Melanie ; I know that, much as you like reading and writing pastorals, there is nothing you dread so much in reality, and you are the very last person in the world I should think of inviting to garden chairs and deal tables ! My furniture has long been ordered, and about a dozen rooms are already in a very habitable state—it was about yours that I was in such a hurry yesterday. You once said that you liked rose-coloured furniture, because it was becoming to people with dark hair, or something of that sort ; and so.....”

“ How is it possible that you can remember what I most probably said years ago ? ” asked Melanie with some surprise : “ it must have been about the time that my boudoir was being newly furnished ! ”

“ Precisely,—but I should perhaps have forgotten your remark if I had not afterwards seen

you in the boudoir, and found that in rose-coloured light you were perfectly irresistible. There you sat as usual composing verses; but, even while scanning the lines, you arranged a casket of jewels, which gave your appearance such a charming mixture of occident and orient that added to your black hair, for which I have always had a sort of passion: I—at once, and without hesitation, fell desperately in love with you.”

“Nonsense, Rupert!”

“Fact, I assure you. If my poor uncle were alive he could bear witness, for to him I told my love!”

“Well,” said Melanie laughing, “and what did he say?”

“He said it was the best thing that could have happened to me,—that a sentimental fancy for a woman of talent and fashion, such as you were, would be of the greatest advantage to me, and form my manners better than anything else in the world; so you see you have unconsciously assisted in my education.”

“If that be the case,” said Melanie, “I must say you have shown your gratitude for my services in rather an extraordinary way. No one, not even Wilhelm, has ever so openly turned me into ridicule as you have!”

“That,” said Rupert, “is the most curious

thing of all ; when actually in the act of laughing at you, I admired you, and would not for any consideration have had you other than you were ! ”

“ Allow me to doubt the existence of your admiration, Rupert. ”

“ No, I won’t,—when you believe so many other queer things, you must believe that too. I assure you, just before you left Berlin and came to settle here, I had begun to think it quite possible that between us (notwithstanding our difference of disposition) a mysterious sympathy of souls..... ”

“ Spirits, not souls,” said Melanie, gravely interrupting him.

“ You used to say souls. ”

“ I don’t think I did ; but at all events Edouard has convinced me of the disadvantages of an incorrect use of the expressions, body, soul, and spirit : the body is what we have in common with plants and the lowest order of animals,—the soul is neither more nor less than the invisible being or life of the body : by so speaking, we give ourselves merely the highest rank among animals. ”

Rupert looked attentive, and she continued : “ Now, though some animals in the creation bear a strong resemblance, both in form and organization, to man, there is, in fact, an impassable gulf between them. It is the intellect or spirit that gives us a place quite alone in the creation. ”

“O ho!” cried Rupert; “this sounds better than the ghosts and goblins about which you used to talk so much last year, after having read Justinus Kerner’s *Somnambulist of Prevorst*. I suppose Zorndorff got tired of pretending to believe such a heap of marvellous imaginings, and has endeavoured to turn your mind to something else.”

“You are quite mistaken, Rupert; however, all I want to explain to you is, that to prevent a confusion of ideas, one should in speaking, instead of body, use the word soul, which expresses its life and being, and for what is commonly called the immortal soul—the word spirit.”

“Soul and spirit,” repeated Rupert, “and no body at all! But, if I am not mistaken, Kerner’s *Somnambulist* also says, that in death the spirit will be separated from the soul as well as from the brain and heart.”

“It will,” cried Melanie eagerly; “and if you once agree to the correctness of the terms soul and spirit, all confusion ceases,—all unnecessary wonder about the union of such different things as spirit and body ceases: we have only to take the soul as connecting link, if you have no objection.....”

“None whatever,” said Rupert, closing Cyrilla’s portfolio and coming towards her.

“Then, Rupert, you see, between spirit and

soul there is sufficient resemblance to admit of amalgamation ; for while spirit is immaterial, quite distinct from matter, the soul, as vital or directive principle of the body, is not without a certain consciousness of being, although it cannot in thinking and imagining arrive at taking itself as an object of thought or forming the idea of an idea."

"We will talk of all this some other day when I have more time," said Rupert, rising ; "and I may, I hope, now congratulate you on having formed an 'idea of an idea' which, I trust, will put to flight all the apparitions which were so destructive to your peace of mind when you chanced to be in a room alone, or in the dark."

"Why, not exactly," answered Melanie with some embarrassment, "for you see the two systems admit of....."

"An amalgamation?" cried Rupert. "My dear Melanie, that would take long to prove, and must also be deferred to some other day. I ought to be off now, if I mean to give you the pleasure of my company at dinner."

"Try to be here in right time, Rupert,—you know Wilhelm cannot endure having to wait."

"Then don't wait one minute for me. I say, Melanie," he added, stopping at the door, "I wish you would prevent Zorndorff from talking about religion or philosophy before Cyrilla. She is very

young, you know, and he might fill her mind with doubts and perplexities."

"And I say, Rupert, you seem to have a most erroneous idea of Cyrilla. It is true she is young, but she has read, heard, and seen much more than you suppose, and can support her opinions as well as can be expected from.....a woman."

"Oh, I have the highest possible opinion of her intellect and education, I assure you; nevertheless, you must allow that philosophical speculations are useless, if not dangerous, for most people. I pity those who make philosophy their study. What has been the result of all our systems? A collection of curious hypotheses, for the fabrication of which we Germans are as celebrated as the English for their cutlery, or the Genevese for watches."

"But," said Melanie, "many things are taught at our universities under the name of philosophy that are both interesting and instructive, without being at all dangerous."

"You know very well that was not what I meant,—I referred to Zorndorff's scepticism."

"Oh, I assure you he is greatly improved in that respect. Cyrilla has been of great use to him."

"Indeed!"

"He goes to church quite regularly now, pays the greatest attention to the sermon, and talks of it

afterwards with us. Last Sunday he took notes, and repeated the whole sermon in the evening almost word for word."

"In mockery!" exclaimed Rupert, his brows slightly contracted.

"Not at all, perfectly seriously—he is remarkably eloquent; you must hear him some day."

"No, thank you," said Rupert, as he strode towards the door; "I prefer hearing a less eloquent discourse from some one authorized to preach,—from a man like Englmann, whose practice is a living sermon of the doctrines he professes."

CHAPTER XI.

MELANIE's remark, that Rupert could not endure the idea of having offended any one, was perfectly correct. Although intending to show his indifference to, and if necessary, his determination not to marry his cousin, no sooner had he heard that she was annoyed at his neglect, than he felt sorry for it, and wished to make amends. When about half way to Freilands, the voice of conscience became so clamorous and reproachful that he turned his horse's head, rode quickly back to Exfort, dressed for dinner, and hurried to the Government House, a full hour before he was expected. Cyrilla and Zorndorff were in the drawing-room, the door into the President's study was open, and his heavy step was audible, as he paced backwards and forwards, while dictating in a low voice to his secretary. Cyrilla was reading, Zorndorff writing, when

Rupert was announced, and they both looked up as he entered.

Nodding familiarly to Zorndorff, he advanced quickly towards Cyrilla, stooped down and kissed her cheek; but it was with a nonchalance, made rather too evident by the fact, that, at the same moment, he drew off his gloves, and his eyes wandered round the room in search of Melanie. Now, Cyrilla, like all young and pretty women, was not disposed to submit willingly to mere duty kisses; she would rather have dispensed with them altogether, and endeavoured, by a very significant shake of her head, to demonstrate her impatience under the infliction; she even bent over her book, and pretended to read, as, with a laudable effort to look grave and penitent, he said, "I hear you are offended with me, Cyrilla, and I acknowledge not altogether without reason; nevertheless, I hope you will forgive my—inattention—carelessness—thoughtlessness—or whatever name you may choose to give my offence, when I.....but perhaps the best thing I could do would be to tell you the real cause of it!"

"If there be a cause," replied Cyrilla, while she quietly played with the leaves of her book, "if there be a cause, not one of the words you have used is the right name for what you have done—or rather not done!"

"Why Melanie herself could not have given me a better answer," cried Rupert, laughing; "I did not expect you to weigh my words in that manner."

"Of course not," said Cyrilla; "I have heard from Melanie that you consider me quite a child."

"When I saw you last, dear Cyrilla, you were a child; the intervening years have passed quickly, and you are scarcely at all changed—I mean in features. Even these long fair curls are just what they used to be. Oh, why," he said, lightly touching them; "why are they not black, or even dark brown?"

"Because I am an Adlerkron Windhorst," answered Cyrilla, laughing; "and while they remind you of our near relationship, they tell you, as plainly as words could do, that their colour can never in any way interest or concern you."

"Do they? I wonder if your mother would allow.....your curls to speak in this manner to me—my aunt certainly would not."

"What mamma would permit, I don't know; what my aunt—I don't care."

"Then she did say something to you about it?"

"About what?" asked Cyrilla, looking up inquiringly.

"About me."

"Not a word—not a syllable—but I heard from others that you had the ridiculous weakness of

imagining that every woman who was commonly civil to you must necessarily wish to marry you!"

"Who could have traduced me in this manner!" exclaimed Rupert, while a blush of mixed annoyance and shame spread over his features. "What a weak vain fool you must think me!"

"Not exactly," said Cyrilla; "for the person who gave me the information more than hinted that it was your possessions, and not your person, that you suspected to be the object of all designing womankind."

Rupert remained silent for more than a minute.

"It seems," added Cyrilla, "that you cannot quite deny the charge."

"I was not thinking of it," replied Rupert, "I—I wish we were alone—I should like to be perfectly candid with you."

"*He* is too busy writing to hear us," said Cyrilla, glancing towards Zorndorff; "but we can go to the sofa at the window, if you choose."

And to the sofa they went, and Rupert, without hesitation or reserve, whispered the whole story of his aunt's plans. Cyrilla did not attach the importance to his communication which he had expected, and seemed to think the whole affair very amusing; but the merry answer and light laugh that served so completely to reassure him, equally effectually destroyed the equanimity of Count Zorn-

dorff. She had thought him too busy writing to hear ; but he *had* heard Rupert, with all the familiarity of near relationship, call his cousin "dear Cyrilla," and use the pronoun, *Du*, the tutoiement *Dutzen*, as it is called in Germany, which in itself removes at once all obstacles to perfect intimacy : he saw Cyrilla go with him to a distant sofa, and whisper and laugh ! And there they were now, as if they had been together all their lives, talking of places and people he knew nothing about !

He stopped writing, leaned his head on his hand, and indulged in a long reverie of a more serious than agreeable nature, the result of which seemed to be a determination not to look at or disturb the conversation of the cousins, for he took up his papers and walked with them into the President's study.

"Ah, I'm so much obliged to Zorndorff for taking himself off," observed Rupert.

"I'm afraid we have disturbed him," said Cyrilla, "and he was writing something of consequence for his uncle."

"What made him bring anything of that kind to write in *this* room?"

"He says he likes the temperature here, and the perfume of the flowers," replied Cyrilla.

"Luxurious fellow !" exclaimed Rupert ; "un-

changed, unchangeable! but a.....what were we talking about? My uncle Carl? or.....the time we were at Aix.....or, no.....our aunt in Salzburg, I believe.....Dreadful woman is n't she?"

"Most unamiable, most disagreeable," said Cyrilla.

"And then her stinginess! what one suffers from cold in her house is intolerable!"

"Thank Heaven, I have never been obliged to live with her," rejoined Cyrilla.

"But I was," said Rupert, "and longer than I liked. However, directly I left the university, I proposed travelling, and when my uncle refused his consent, I went into the army—more to get away from her than for anything else. As long as my uncle lived, his house of course remained my head quarters, but when she became a widow, I decamped altogether. Had she married General Zorndorff, as we expected, though it would have half disinherited me, I might have been tempted to stay with them, more for the fun of the thing, however, than because I happened at the time to be his aid-de-camp."

"General Zorndorff!" repeated Cyrilla, "any relation of....."

"Only his father, but as different a man as can well be imagined: they had been engaged to each other during some of those years of revolution

which now belong to history, but being both hot-tempered, they quarrelled, and mutually returned all letters and locks of hair. The war separated them, and our aunt married uncle Gottfried."

"What a life he must have led with her!" observed Cyrilla.

"Not so bad as you suppose. He was one of those quiet sort of men who do what they like themselves, and let others do the same; they never interfered with each other. He attended to his wide-spreading speculations, employed his leisure hours in the arrangement of my affairs, as you know he was my guardian, and his wife amused herself with her *house friend*."

"Her house friend!" repeated Cyrilla, "and who was that?"

"They were numerous. I can remember at least half-a-dozen."

"I did not think she had so many friends in the world," said Cyrilla.

"Oh, the friendship was not very great after all—they were only people.....young men.....who, having plenty of time to spare, got the habit of being eternally in her house, blowing the flute, scraping the violin, or driving about with her—just like Polyak, you know. Now, when the General as widower and she as widow again became betrothed, he informed her in one of their *tête-à-têtes*

that, though he had an aid-de-camp, he should consider such an appendage quite unnecessary for his wife.....but....." said Rupert stopping suddenly, "perhaps I ought not to tell you all this.... it's very improper conversation.....eh?"

"Oh, not at all," said Cyrilla, laughing, "only family affairs which I ought to know: pray, go on."

"Well, he plainly insisted on a cessation of all such demi-sentimental connexions at once and for ever; said that he had no fancy for blowing out his own brains or those of any one else, and such would inevitably be the consequence of a persistence in the line of conduct which she had observed during her first marriage! It was strong language to use towards a middle-aged woman who was about to settle half of her very large fortune upon him; but I think he acted honourably, though many people, and among them his son, thought him a great fool. I am told that this their second encounter, in all the strength of riper years, was terrific—they separated, vowing never to speak again: but the cause of quarrel became known; my aunt received one or two disagreeable anonymous letters, could not avoid meeting the General wherever she went, and at last emigrated to Salzburg."

"Quite a history," said Cyrilla, thoughtfully, "but," she added, looking up with a smile, "but

suppose now she were to marry Count Polyak, how odd it would be to have such a little young uncle!"

"Not the least idea of any such thing on either side," answered Rupert. "When the regiment leaves, Polyak will give her some handsome present as *souvenir*, (she never gives anything,) and then she will look out for his successor, and so it will go on until she is quite old, when she will either become outrageously pious, or an inveterate card-player."

"A card-player, I fear," said Cyrilla; "for dear mamma was often obliged to play with her for hours last winter; and sometimes Fernanda, even when dressed for a ball, has been forced to play piquet until the carriage came to the door."

Melanie at this moment entered the room, and Rupert exclaimed, "Well, I hope you have arranged everything with the President, and I may expect you all to-morrow at Freilands?"

"Yes; Wilhelm did not make a single objection—likes the plan of all things—but poor dear Edouard

"And what prevents 'poor dear Edouard' from going also?" asked Rupert, laughing; "he can drive into and out of Exfort every day with Falkenstein, and if he prefer riding, he can have a horse."

"Such a one perhaps as you lent me, when I

was last in Berlin!" said Zorndorff, who was now standing at the door with the President.

Rupert coloured and laughed.

"What do you mean?" asked Melanie.

"He offered me the choice of all his horses, and when I went to his stables, not one of any description was there, they had all been borrowed or taken off by his friends. On my observing that I should be glad to have a phaeton, droschka, or whatever might be forthcoming, one of the grooms informed me that the head coachman had just driven out with the only pair of carriage horses left."

"I promise that nothing of that kind shall happen while you are at Freilands," said Rupert.

"Nevertheless, I must refuse your invitation."

"But you will honour my déjeûné with your presence next week, I hope," said Rupert, carelessly, Zorndorff's refusal apparently making much less impression on him than on the others.

"What day is it to be?"

"Ask Melanie or Cyrilla. I intend to give them *carte blanche* to make Freilands as gay as it can be made, for the next six weeks. We shall begin with a déjeûné, because some of my fair friends in Exfort choose to say that I promised to give one as soon as I should enter into possession; and, indeed, I don't know what we could do better."

"Nothing," said Cyrilla, "excepting, perhaps, getting up a comedy, or an opera, or"

"Delightful!" cried Rupert eagerly; "there is a large space on the top of the house, which seems as if it had been intended for a theatre. And now, Melanie," he added, as they went to dinner, "if you can arrange some tableaux, and discover a haunted room at Freilands, I really think we shall be able to give the inhabitants of Exfort something to talk about."

CHAPTER XII.

FREILANDS was deficient in all the interest attached to an old, but abounded in all the comforts expected from a new place. The first building, a hunting-lodge, had been turned into offices, when, after a few visits, the proprietor had discovered that the park possessed beauties which rendered it worthy of being the site of a handsome residence. Not alone was it enlivened and irrigated by a not quite inconsiderable river, but a lake of very fair proportions, and trees of every possible size and description, had been by him so judiciously brought to view, that even Prince Pückler might have been satisfied, and no one in Exfort had thought of disputing the propriety of denominating the grounds about the house, "English gardens."

The building itself had a noble hall, a magnificent staircase, high spacious rooms, large windows,

and a long wide stone balcony, which formed a roof to the portico under which the principal entrance had been made. The furniture was the handsomest that the best upholsterer in Berlin could furnish, and was rich, comfortable, and perfectly modern. Rupert had reserved but one room for himself, which he justly thought he could arrange better than any one else; it was his own private sitting-room, the walls of which he purposed covering with a perfect and valuable collection of the newest arms of all descriptions, from the most diminutive pistol to the longest rifle, the lightest dagger to the most ponderous sword. The apartment he happened to choose was at the very end of the reception rooms, and particularly cheerful, from having both a south and west aspect; but, when he returned home from his cousins on the evening just recorded, to his infinite dismay he discovered in this very room a large glass, extending from the ceiling to the floor, just opposite the doorway, and occupying the place intended for his muskets and carabines.

All protestations were vain; such a glass was necessary to extend the vista—the end room at the other side was also furnished with one. It must be so.

“Then,” said Rupert, “you may furnish this room altogether like the other end room, and I

shall take the one adjoining it; but it is hard enough that I may not have the room I like best in my own house."

"In fact," said the upholsterer, evidently pleased at the concession, although so unwillingly made, "in fact, the room belongs to the suite, and ought never to have been, allow me to say so, disfigured with guns and swords. If they had been pictures, indeed, ..."

"No pictures," cried Rupert, impatiently; "I am tired of pictures, and wish this house to be as light and cheerful as possible—glasses and candelabra as many as you please, but no pictures."

"But," asked the man, a little alarmed, "but you have no objection to the frescoes in the ball-room, I hope? The dancing figures are so appropriate, that I left them as I found them, and"

"O, I have no objection to dancing figures," said Rupert, good-humouredly, "or to the Cupids either, who seem to be playing at hide-and-seek among the wreaths of impossible flowers that adorn the orchestra gallery."

The upholsterer bowed—he did not feel quite sure of the sincerity of the praise bestowed, but he consoled himself with the idea that a little irritation was natural on the part of his employer, when he had been almost compelled to resign a room to

which he had evidently taken a fancy. As Rupert whistled for his dogs and walked off towards the lake, the workmen were summoned, and, late as it was, all the furniture, guns, pistols, and swords inclusive, removed into the adjoining room, arranged according to a sketch found on the writing-table, and the rose-coloured furniture which had that day arrived from Berlin substituted. When Rupert returned, they were still hammering at the curtains, and the sound induced him to look into the room. After a short survey, he seemed more than contented with the change, and smiled with inward satisfaction as he thought, "I shall tell Melanie, that I expect her to consider this room as especially hers, on account of the colour of the furniture, and then I can manage like the President, and open and shut my door according as I feel disposed for company or—solitude."

The next day his relations arrived, but Rupert did *not* manage like the President, for he never felt at all disposed for solitude: the door of his armoury, as Cyrilla directly named his room, was never closed, and he began very soon to discover that fair hair and delicate features looked quite as well as their contraries, when seen in the light reflected from rose-coloured silk. How far the principle of opposition to the "dreadful woman," (namely his aunt,) might have enabled him to resist these

allurements, it is hard to say; but he was not proof against the fascination of Cyrilla's voice and highly cultivated talent for music. He was himself an excellent musician, and his well exercised tenor harmonized naturally and easily with her high soprano: charmed with her, and perhaps not a little pleased with himself, he induced her every evening to sing with him, apologizing to her, and even in some degree to himself, for the hours spent in the music-room, by whispering, "We must do something to amuse the President, or he may get tired of Freilands."

One evening before the lighted lamps had drawn them together, while Melanie was sitting in the large balcony, which it has been said formed the roof of the portico, pensively gazing on the rising moon, the President standing at a window endeavouring to catch the last rays of departing daylight on a book over which he resolutely bent, Rupert called Cyrilla into the music-room, and begged her to sing for him—for him alone. "There is nothing so de—licious as music in this twilight hour," he added; "and I think I feel rather disposed for something sentimental or melancholy, just at present."

Cyrilla's light fingers modulated through several keys, before she felt herself sufficiently melancholy to sing "Theckla's Song" of despairing love.

Rupert had walked to the other end of the room when she began: he soon again approached her, for, to suit the words, which she pronounced with extraordinary distinctness, her voice became softer and softer, and he drew nearer and nearer, until he reached a chair close to hers. She ceased almost whisperingly, and remained silent, her hands falling listlessly together. Like most people who sing with feeling, she was moved, "even with the sound herself had made."

"Thank you," he said absently, and then, after a pause, added, "If you were other than my light-hearted cousin Cyrilla, I should feel convinced that nothing but a personal appropriation of those words of Schiller's could enable you to sing them with such expression—such passion."

"I fancied myself in the place of Theckla while I was singing."

"And you felt" began Rupert.

"I felt for the moment all her painful uncertainty, her hopes, her fears. I even tried to imagine her love for Max Piccolomini, that most perfect personification of truth and honour; but now," she said gaily, "now I feel nothing of all this; I only perceive that I am in a very dark room with my cousin Rupert, whose resemblance to Piccolomini I have yet to learn."

"I hope that in truth and honour I may never

be found deficient," said Rupert; "and as your imagination seems to be strong, I should like very much to know if you have already formed, not what Melanie would call an *ideal*, but a rational incorporation of these qualities, and as many others as are necessary to make a

"Whose voice is that in the next room?" cried Cyrilla, suddenly rising. "Can it—can it be Count Zorndorff?"

"Very probably," answered Rupert, not quite willingly following her out of the room.

It was Zorndorff—he was leaning against one of the glass doors opening on the balcony, and speaking to Melanie, who sat outside. As the moonlight fell on his pale features, Cyrilla observed a languor in them and in his whole appearance almost denoting illness, and though he must have heard her speaking to Rupert as she entered the room, he did not look up until both stood beside him.

"I hope," said Rupert, "you have got tired of being alone, and that you have come to remain here."

"No, oh no," cried Melanie quickly, "he must not think of such a thing."

"And why?" asked Rupert, with some surprise. "Did you not tell me you wished of all things to consult him about our *déjeuner*—that I was too great a blockhead to be able to give you any advice concerning the arrangements?"

“Dear Rupert, I certainly did not call you a blockhead,” said Melanie; “I only observed that it would not do to leave everything to your house-keeper and chef de cuisine.”

“Well, at all events, to my certain knowledge you wrote Zorndorff a note this morning, telling him our dilemma about the theatre, and asking his advice; and now that he is here, you will not allow him to remain with us.”

“I have heard that your theatre cannot be ready even for the projected tableaux,” said Zorndorff, “and that is—partly—the—the reason why I have walked here this evening. I came to speak to you about a substitute.”

“You *walked* here!” said Cyrilla; “ah, that is the reason you look so fatigued—the day has been unusually sultry.”

Zorndorff glanced for a moment towards Melanie, bent his eyes on the ground, and remained silent.

“And the substitute?” asked Rupert.

“Is of a kind more likely to interest others than you,” answered Zorndorff; “a French magnetizer, and a young man who allows himself to be magnetized, have just arrived at Exfort, and would have no objection to”

“Ah! that will do famously,” cried Rupert, interrupting him; “engage them by all means. How did you happen to hear of them?”

"Count Lindesmar gave them a letter to his sister, Madame de Bellegarde, and she naturally thought that my aunt was the person most likely to be of use to them."

"Pray, Melanie," said Rupert, "write to the Bellegardes, and tell them to bring these magnetic treasures with them to-morrow."

"Madame de Bellegarde's sister arrived to-day from Italy with her husband," observed Zorndorff; "perhaps you would like to have them also."

"What, Virginie?" exclaimed Rupert.

"*Virginie*," said Zorndorff with some emphasis.

"I must send an express to Exfort directly," cried Rupert, ringing the bell; "and," he continued, turning to Melanie, "as the De Rubignys will probably come with the Bellegardes, you may say that we shall send a carriage for these magnetic men."

Melanie went with him into another room to write; Zorndorff joined the President, who just then entered, and walked up and down the large apartment with him in grave discourse; Cyrilla, left alone, turned into the balcony, and, leaning against the balustrades, indulged in a long and earnest reverie. Her youthful face had the unusual expression of deep sadness, and, if the truth must be told, she at that moment felt herself oppressed by "a world of woe and sorrow." She did not

attempt to analyze her feelings—it would have been difficult to have done so; for surprise, wounded pride, irritation, and grief, struggled for pre-eminence, until disappointment of the bitterest description took possession of her mind. She had gone to meet Count Zorndorff with a heart beating violently from joyful expectation, and he had scarcely looked at her, scarcely answered her, had been indifferent, cold, almost glacial. She worried herself endeavouring to find out the cause of so unexpected a change of manner until the lamps were lit, when she left the balcony, and, taking a book, seated herself at a distant table, and made the most violent efforts to be deaf to the sound of perambulating feet, and to concentrate her thoughts, through the medium of her eyes, on the pages before her—in vain. The words conveyed no meaning to her mind, and even while she read them, Zorndorff's figure as he had listlessly leaned against the glass door, was ever officiously presenting itself. Slowly she laid down the volume, and reluctantly drew a piece of work towards her; for her fingers having been chiefly employed in acquiring mechanical dexterity on the keys of a pianoforte, and in the nice management of a pencil or paint-brush, she was but an indifferent embroiderer; nevertheless, like all her female acquaintance, she had an astonishing piece of work in progress, and, on the

present occasion at least, had reason to agree with Bacon in thinking it pleasant to have "a lively work upon a lightsome ground."

Perhaps the only time when a woman can justly rejoice in being a woman, is on an occasion like the foregoing. In moments of mental uneasiness, or even mental pain, the alleviation given by a needle is indescribable: it seems to possess a sort of magnetic power in drawing the cares from the brain to itself; and even when its motions are uselessly employed, the mere effort to direct it generally distracts the mind or occupies the thoughts so effectually, that it produces in very expert and very indifferent workwomen precisely the same result. The flower over which Cyrilla now bent her graceful head assumed a most fanciful form. It may have been oriental, and have possessed a mysterious meaning—in the German flora it could not be found; and Rupert, on his return, as he leaned over her chair, compared it without circumlocution to the wonderful flowers on the ball-room gallery.

"I believe you are right," said Cyrilla, smiling, as she held it at a little distance; "I have, as usual, made some stupid mistake in counting the stitches. I wish I could work like Adrienne de Bellegarde, or Julia de Lindesmar."

"Have they become particular friends of yours?" demanded Rupert.

“Not exactly—but they are the gayest people in Exfort; and everybody knows, or wishes to know them. They are rather free, or French, as they call it, in their manners.”

After a pause, Rupert observed, “Madame de Bellegarde’s sister has arrived from Italy, and will probably be here to-morrow.”

“The Vicomtesse de Rubigny, is it not?” asked Cyrilla, beginning to pick out the petals of her fancy flower.

“Yes.”

“I am rather curious to see her,” she continued, “for she must strangely resemble me in voice and manner.”

“In voice extremely,” said Rupert, a little embarrassed, “in manner not at all; it is only a harebrained fellow such as I am who could for a moment have mistaken one for the other—the room was dark, and I was at the time in daily expectation of seeing her.”

“Were you?” said Cyrilla, leaning back in her chair, and looking up at him; “she is handsome, I suppose?”

“N—o, I believe not.”

“Not plain, surely?”

“Oh no!”

“Well, what is she then?”

“Interesting-looking.”

“And is she amusing, talkative like her sisters?”

“She is not—talkative.”

“Nor you either, this evening,” said Cyrilla, rising just in time to hear Zorndorff say to Melanie:—

“I should like to see the whole house; you know I have a great fancy for furniture and everything of that kind. I know a great deal more about the castle at Windhorst than Adlerkron does.”

“That’s quite true,” said Rupert. “Fancy his counting the windows there one fine morning, and telling me I did not deserve to possess such a place, because I did not know how many openings had been made in the walls to admit the light of day.”

“I recommend his waiting for the light of day to inspect Freilands,” observed the President, “and think, if he mean to return home to-night, the sooner he sets out on his walk the better.”

“I can look at the house,” said Zorndorff, “and drink tea with you too before I leave, as there is moonlight. Come, aunt Melanie, you must be my cicerone.”

“You will not require much time,” said Rupert, “for the hall, staircase, these rooms, and the ball-room, are alone worth looking at—the wings have only a ground floor; one belongs to the President

and my cousins, the other, with the breakfast and dining room, is intended for visitors. You will find a room ready for you if you choose to occupy it."

"Not just to-night—but perhaps"

"Come," said Melanie, "you shall first see Rupert's rooms, as they are a continuation of these."

"Don't forget to show him the beautifully inlaid pistols," said Cyrilla, as they were leaving the room.

Zorndorff stopped for a moment, and observed, "I suppose Adlerkron has been performing some of his extraordinary feats with a pistol for you. A man's life would not be worth much who was to meet him in a duel."

"I don't know that," said Rupert, pushing a chair towards Cyrilla; "shooting at a mark and firing at a man are very different things."

"Do you shoot so very well?" asked Cyrilla, turning to him.

"Yes, but we are not going to talk of that now—I want to tell you about the pony-carriage that will be here the day after to-morrow."

"Oh how good-natured of you, in the midst of all your arrangements here, to remember that I said I should like to have a pony-carriage."

"I remembered that you said you should like to learn to drive, and.....and I like very much the idea of teaching you. Are you courageous?"

“Not very; I rather hope the ponies may be very quiet.”

He believed—he was almost sure they were steady—she would like the drives in the wood when the weather was warm, but some morning early she must go to the moor, the most interesting though worthless part of Freilands, but he had extensive plans for the improvement of it—he would show her a map and explain how in twenty or thirty years the whole marsh could be made arable land.

The President looked over his book, raised his eyebrows, and drew his mouth into a more significant than becoming grimace, while the cousins pored over the map together, their blonde curling hair so exactly the same colour, that at a little distance the two heads appeared like one.

Nearly an hour elapsed before Melanie returned; when she did so, she was alone. “Edouard,” she said, “had thought it better to return home before midnight.”

“Unsociable fellow,” exclaimed Rupert, “there is no use in trying to be intimate or friendly with him; he repulses all advances, though he has told me more than a dozen times that our fates are mysteriously linked together, and that we can never long remain asunder.”

“Did he? Where did he hear that?” asked

Melanie, with an appearance of the deepest interest.

"A few years ago, he discovered some wonderful man—an astrologer—who drew a scheme of his horoscope. He wanted to have mine too, but I refused to tell him any particulars concerning the day and hour of my birth. I heard afterwards he took the trouble to make the necessary inquiries of my uncle."

"And you never questioned him?"

"Never."

"Do you mean to say," asked Cyrilla, "that you did not feel any curiosity?"

"No, I don't mean to say that; but I am more than inclined to doubt the power of any one to augur or predict from the conjunction of stars at the hour of birth; and I am quite convinced that the knowledge of our future in this world is denied us for a good purpose, and is certainly conducive to our happiness."

"But," hesitated Melanie, "but you don't think it—absolutely—irreligious, having one's horoscope?"

"He has told you plainly," said the President, looking up suddenly, "that he considers it useless and—foolish; and he is right, for tampering with one's happiness is folly."

Melanie shrank, as she always did from the probably unintentional harshness of the President,

and became silent; the subject was one that Rupert disliked; Cyrilla was indifferent and pre-occupied; and the conversation continued very desultory until the party separated for the night.

Cyrilla was still sitting at an open window in her room, when she heard a gentle knock at the door, and immediately after Melanie stood before her in a long white robe, with a taper in her hand.

"Enter, Lady Macbeth!" said Cyrilla, smiling faintly, while she turned towards her without moving from the low chair near the window where she had been sitting motionless for more than half-an-hour. "Are you walking in your sleep? or has the President got an express from Exfort?"

"Neither," answered Melanie. "The fact is, Cyrilla," she continued, extinguishing her taper and then walking uneasily up and down the room, "the fact is, I must speak to you—must tell you something—must get your assistance"

"If your manner were not so very really serious," said Cyrilla, "I should imagine you were about to disclose some grand secret concerning to-morrow's festivities."

"O, I am not thinking of to-morrow, I can only think of one thing now. Tell me, Cyrilla," she cried, stopping suddenly before her, "you—you don't—no, I know you don't—care at all for Edouard?"

"That would be unpardonable," answered Cyrilla, "after all the trouble you have taken to make me like him."

"But I mean, you don't *particularly* like him?"

"Yes I do. I like talking to him better than to any one I know when I feel disposed to be rational—Rupert is more amusing and cheerful, but"

"Ah!—exactly—that's just the sort of answer I wished for," said Melanie. "Now, dear, only imagine," she continued, drawing a chair close to her sister's, "only imagine—Edouard has had the folly—the madness—after all my good advice and warnings, to—to fall desperately in love with you! Did you ever know anything so distressing?"

"Dreadful!" said Cyrilla, with a smile of such perfect satisfaction, that nothing but her sister's pre-occupation could have prevented her from observing it.

"He came here this evening," continued Melanie, "to tell me that the short separation of ten or twelve days had convinced him that he could only live in your presence, that all his ambitious projects had become worthless in his eyes, that he heard your voice in every breeze, saw your face in every—every....."

"What?" asked Cyrilla, with a gay laugh.

"No matter. I see you are disposed to laugh

and be merry as usual. I hope, however, you will have the kindness to aid my endeavours to cure him of his unfortunate passion by showing him your indifference and dislike in the plainest manner."

"But I neither feel the one nor the other," said Cyrilla.

"Then you must feign both for *his* good."

"No, dear, I should rather not," said Cyrilla, with considerable decision of manner.

"I could almost think our poor Edouard's sufferings gave you pleasure," cried Melanie, petulantly; "and, laugh as you will, he has suffered, and greatly too. You must have perceived how ill he looks."

"He does look ill," answered Cyrilla, forcing her features into as serious an expression as the exultation of her feelings at the moment would permit, "but I supposed the long hot walk might have

"No, no, no, no! He wanted at once to see and speak to you. Fortunately, you were in the music-room with Rupert, and he decided on consulting me. I confess I could not restrain some tears of sympathy, for I know too well what it is to sacrifice love on the altar of necessity!"

"Dear Melanie!" said Cyrilla; and every particle of gaiety forsook her manner as she lightly laid her hand on her sister's shoulder, and looked into

her large black eyes as they filled with the slowly gathering tears of melancholy recollection.

"I listened to all he had to say," continued Melanie, "and when he talked rationally of devoting himself to his profession, and living contentedly, as others have done and others will do, and added that he had no doubt of rising rapidly in it, and being in time able to satisfy the reasonable wishes of any reasonable woman, I felt strongly inclined to say, 'You are right, Edouard. If happiness be attainable in this world, it is only to be found in the society of a being with whom we feel congeniality of mind.....'"

"And," whispered Cyrilla, bending down her head that her sister might not see the smile which again played round her mouth, "and a mysterious combination of spirits!"

"Yes," said Melanie, by no means unconscious of her sister's irony. "Yes, so I would have spoken had the object of his affection been other than *you*; but knowing that it was on you that he had bestowed this warmest feeling of his noble heart, I was obliged to answer as you would have done."

"Your answer?" cried Cyrilla quickly, and with an anxiety she made no efforts to conceal.

"It was prosaic in the extreme. I said that if

he talked in that way to you, you would laugh at him !”

“Did you ?” said Cyrilla, biting her lip and breathing quickly, while she pulled and puckered the trimming of her dressing-gown with great diligence ; “and then..... ?”

“And then I told him how carefully and rationally you had been educated, and what pains your mother had taken to prevent your having any romantic ideas on the subject of marriage ; and though you might not altogether agree with her, still.....”

“Really, Melanie,” cried Cyrilla, with ill-concealed impatience, “the manner in which you inform everybody that my mother is worldly, and that I am looking for an eligible *parti*, is.....is most provoking ! I wonder that your own feelings of delicacy do not prevent you from talking in this manner of your nearest relations !”

“Edouard is also a relation, and I do not think I have any right, from a mistaken notion of delicacy, to endanger his peace of mind or future happiness.”

“And is my peace of mind and future happiness not worth taking into consideration ?” asked Cyrilla reproachfully.

“I know that neither is in danger, for even supposing that you liked Edouard, the fear of poverty would soon stifle the imprudent affection.”

"You forget that I have never known anything but poverty since I was born," observed Cyrilla.

"Why, yes, and it was a luxurious kind of poverty; for, after all, you always had everything just like other people."

"True," answered Cyrilla, "but my father was constantly in debt, and I should have preferred feeling absolute want to hearing of bills unpaid, and seeing my mother wasting away from care and anxiety."

"Edouard never had.....never will have a debt," said Melanie; "he is too proud to endure anything of that kind. He may wish for riches—be discontented if he do not possess them, but he will undoubtedly live within whatever income he may have."

"In that case," said Cyrilla, "he can, as he said himself, 'satisfy the reasonable desires of any reasonable woman;' and I hope, dear Melanie, considering the care with which you seem to think I have been educated, you will allow me to take it for granted that I am.....a reasonable woman?"

"You?"

"Yes; the surprise you exhibit is not very flattering, but still....."

"I don't quite understand," cried Melanie, in some alarm. "You don't mean to say that you would think of marrying Edouard?"

"Suppose," said Cyrilla, with a slight laugh; "suppose I had discovered the congeniality of mind of which you have so often spoken, and the the....." She stopped in a state of embarrassment, and blushing with an intenseness very unusual to her.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Melanie, "you surely do not mean to say that you love him?"

"I don't mean to *say* anything," answered Cyrilla, covering her face with her hands and bending down her head; "but I believe I *feel* more than I need tell you or any one else."

Melanie rose, and again walked up and down the room. "Cyrilla, this will never do," she exclaimed at length. "Never—never—never. All your relations will raise objections. Your aunt will never consent to your union with Edouard—she quarrelled with his father, and....."

"O, I know all about that," said Cyrilla, "and have not the least intention of ever asking her consent."

"But you forget, dear girl, that she is the only person who could, in any way, be of use to you on such an occasion."

"She will never be of use to me, or to any one else," rejoined Cyrilla.

"And then, Wilhelm—he would be outrageous,—would not listen to Edouard for a moment."

"I imagine Count Zorndorff is not likely to consult the President," said Cyrilla; "he is of an age to judge for himself; and having commenced his bureaucratic career, is independent—even in his poverty."

"I have nothing more to say," almost whispered Melanie. "If you indeed love as I once did....."

"A little more, I suspect," said Cyrilla, quickly; "for no Count Falkenstein,—no one on earth,—could induce *me* to sacrifice my love on the altar of necessity."

"What a disagreeable habit you and Rupert have of remembering and repeating my words," said Melanie, with some irritation.

"You ought to be flattered at our doing so; it is a proof that they are uncommon, and worth recollecting."

"Cyrilla, I have but one thing more to say. Do not let Wilhelm know or even suspect any engagement with Edouard, should you enter into one."

"My dear Melanie, you have said so much to Count Zorndorff about my rational education,—have presented him such a disagreeable picture of a heartless worldly girl, that I think it more than probable he will let the matter rest for ever. I have read and heard of men who have required less to induce them to resign women better and wiser than I am."

"O, I have only to give him the slightest hint," began Melanie.

"Never," cried Cyrilla, springing from her chair with a vehemence in strong contrast to her usual gentle movements; "never, to him or to any one, hint or in any way refer to what has passed between us this night. Nothing would have tempted me to speak to you as I have done, had it not been absolutely necessary to disabuse your mind of the erroneous idea you have formed of my character and sentiments."

"I wish," said Melanie, "I had known this sooner."

"Perhaps it is all for the best," replied Cyrilla. "Count Zorndorff can undoubtedly marry more advantageously; and yet I cannot tell you," she added, snatching her handkerchief from the toilet-table, and hastily drawing it across her eyes, "I cannot tell you how foolishly rejoiced I feel at what I have just heard from you."

"Who....." exclaimed Melanie, clasping her hands, "who would have suspected this, after hearing you laugh and jest on all such subjects with Rupert!"

"And do you imagine that we have no feeling, because we do not talk sentimentally? Believe me, Melanie, people often laugh at and pretend incredulity in love, just as they do about ghost stories;

all the while believing and fearing in spite of themselves."

"O no, Cyrilla ; if you had had my experience, you would think differently. A woman perhaps may speak in that way to conceal feelings that education forbids her to exhibit ; but, believe me, a man's jest on such a subject is bitter earnest. Well have the ancients represented Love as a child—it ought to be treated as such—tenderly—considerately, not laughed at—irritated—browbeaten !"

"I'm sure I never meant to do anything of the kind," said Cyrilla, with a demure smile.

"But others have," said Melanie, looking upwards ; "and never can I forget the evening at the Bellegardes, when Edouard talked so charmingly on this very subject. We were speaking of German legends ; and you may remember how he said that they could be traced to the German mythology, and how that had been mixed up with the Roman, as the Roman with the Grecian, but that all the fables of all mythologies contained very good systems of morals, if people would only take the trouble of studying them. He gave several examples, which were both ingenious and amusing ; and, among other things, said that Cupid had been represented as a child, and generally a young child, in order to point out what patience we should have with his perverseness, violence, or instability."

“Yes,” said Cyrilla; “I remember also Adrienne de Bellegarde getting into a sort of ecstasy, and saying that Count Zorndorff deserved to be kissed for his dear funny thoughts.....I think, too, he requested her to kiss him if she felt the slightest inclination.....”

“Yes, I believe we laughed at her a good deal,” said Melanie, “and said *that* was the only one of his thoughts she had been able to understand; but you are sleepy, and to-morrow will be a fatiguing day for us.”

“Not for me,” said Cyrilla, “as I have only to amuse myself. I wish it were come.....”

“And how much has the desire to see Edouard again to do with your wish?”

“More than I should like to tell you, or even to confess to myself,” answered Cyrilla, sighing; “and now, good-night.”

CHAPTER XIII.

RUPERT'S invitations to his déjeuner-dîner had been so very general and comprehensive, and the anxiety of the inhabitants of Exfort so great to take advantage of such an opportunity of inspecting the improvements and new furniture at Freilands, that a large proportion of the company began to arrive with what Melanie called unconscionable exactitude, that is, before she was ready to receive them ; but in the meantime there were gardens to look at, and shady walks to wander in, and bands of music and tents, and when they had walked about, and looked at everything and everybody, they began quietly and at first imperceptibly to separate into classes. The *crème de la crème*, who considered themselves Melanie's intimate friends, unhesitatingly entered the house, took possession of the large balcony, and, secure from the sun's rays under the awning, lei-

surely inspected, through their single and double lorgnettes, the remaining and larger portion of the company, as they walked in groups under the trees, —they being, if we may continue to pursue the meaning of this truly German and pastoral metaphor, the milk, which had subsided, and let its lighter part, the cream, rise. Now, in the town of Exfort, as in all other towns, there was a quantity of adulterated cream, whether composed by a mixture of noxious or innoxious ingredients none but a chemist, or a very nice observer, could tell; but a good deal of this description of cream, viz. a considerable number of very well dressed and exceedingly discontented men and women now began to spread themselves before the house, equally afraid of the reception which they might receive were they to venture to mount the stairs, and of the loss of *caste* which would inevitably ensue should they enjoy themselves unrestrainedly with the others where they were. Rupert, who could not, or would not, understand any of these distinctions, appeared among them, and immediately proposed their entering. They looked at the balcony, then at each other, and stood irresolute, until Cyrilla, who better understood the state of the case, added, “Perhaps you would like to look at my cousin’s collection of arms and pipes. I assure you,” she continued, as they all began to pour into the hall, “I assure

you the pipes are worth looking at,—I believe the most of them are souvenirs ; there are meerschaums in every possible form, and carved wood, and some of china, with such beautiful paintings on them, that if they did not smell of tobacco, I should have stolen them long ago.”

While the now gay and satisfied guests wandered through the rooms, Cyrilla saw from one of the windows the President’s carriage drive under the portico. While still considering whether or not his nephew had arrived with him, Zorndorff passed quickly through the room, overseeing her in the crowd of ignoble persons by whom she was surrounded, and entered the balcony, where he was received with a sort of acclamation by the Bellegardes and their companions. She had not thought of how she should receive him—had merely been conscious of an undefined feeling of anxiety, and a sort of curiosity to know how he would act. The apparent continuation of his conduct of the evening before was irritating enough, but her conversation with Melanie had removed all doubts from her mind, and she turned away, merely resolving to leave him in vain expectation of her appearance on the balcony or in the adjacent rooms for a longer time than he might perhaps desire.

Rupert’s laudable endeavours to banish ceremony, by allowing every one to choose their own place

at the numerous and perfectly similar tables, had been tolerably successful. Pleasure and expectation lighted every countenance; and the party round each consisted generally of friends or acquaintances who had sought each other, and were more than usually united by a common feeling of hunger. Rupert took possession of a place beside Cyrilla, which she had unreservedly said belonged to him.

“What would I not give for your light heart, Adlerkron!” said Zorndorff, as he was passing to the place *vis à vis*. “No sooner have you lost one object of interest than you find another;” and he glanced significantly from Cyrilla to the Vicomtesse de Rubigny, who was sitting at the same table, while he spoke.

“I don’t understand you,” said Rupert, carelessly, and then continued his conversation with Cyrilla, as unconscious as she was conscious that Zorndorff’s eyes were fixed on them both with an expression of such anxious interest that even Melanie, who was not usually very observant, remarked it; and, fearing others might do the same, tried to engage his attention.

“Edouard, have you heard what Professor Huber has been saying?”

“N—o; not exactly, I believe.”

“I am so sorry, as it was just what you wanted to know about magnetic manipulation.”

“ Ah.....indeed !”

“ And then he has visited Justinus Kerner.”

“ I was at Weinsberg just after the Countess Falkenstein left,” said the Professor ; “ but I dare not tell you,” he added blandly, again turning to Melanie, “ I dare not tell you all that that most amiable of poets and men said of the charming and talented acquaintance he had just made.”

“ I spent several most happy days in the neighbourhood of Weinsberg,” said Melanie ; “ Kerner surpassed all my expectations. There is an abyss of poetry and fervour in his dark eyes. He is a phenomenon that we must endeavour to retain in all its pure originality, for the world is becoming every day more and more prosaic and philosophical. The time may come when the existence of such a man may be doubted.....he is already incomprehensible to many.”

“ Do tell me something about this Kerner,” said Cyrilla in a low voice to Rupert ; “ who is he ?”

“ A man who has written a good deal about the sayings and doings of ghosts and goblins, and about sausages being poisonous.....and people won't believe him.”

“ Nonsense, Rupert !.....I really wish to know something of him ; Melanie has talked of nothing else all day.”

“ Of course not, as her head is full of magnetism

and the magnetizer. The fact is, this Justinus Kerner is, I believe, a very amiable man, a physician, and a poet; also the author of a work called 'The Somnambulist of Prevorst,' in which he describes the visions of a—a—a thoroughbred somnambulist. He has besides written some very.... what shall I call them?—genuine lyrical poems."

"You may well say so!" cried the Professor, enthusiastically; "they are perfect, full of feeling, beautiful! Pain and pleasure flow like turbulent and gentle streams through the lines; the ideas are striking, and in the expression of melancholy he is inimitable!"

"But," whispered Cyrilla, "is this poet the same man who believes in ghosts?"

"Yes, and they (I mean the ghosts) will make him immortal, I suspect. His 'Somnambulist' may not be read, his poems may be forgotten, but that a man of learning and genius should, in the face of the world, declare himself the champion of the very commonest and most popular description of ghosts and apparitions, is such an anomaly as must ensure him fame; and he deserves it, too, if it were only for his moral courage."

"O, how you would admire him, did you but know him!" cried Melanie.

"Very likely," answered Rupert, "as a humane and excellent man, and an agreeable poet and com-

panion; but he would never make me believe in gray shadowy figures, with burning eyes, and all that sort of thing. However, this is scarcely a fit place to discuss such subjects. With champagne in our glasses, and *pâté de foie gras* on our plates, who can think of ghosts?"

"For my part," said Cyrilla, "I greatly prefer discussing and thinking of them in a crowded room, and with champagne in my glass, to any other place or in any other way."

"You are not afraid in the dark, like Melanie, are you?"

"No; but I don't like hearing odd noises and rustlings in my room at night."

"Perhaps she is *sensitive*," cried Melanie, eagerly.

"Oh," said Cyrilla, colouring a good deal, "don't imagine that I believe my dead friends or acquaintances can appear to me! Do you?"

"I believe they can," answered Melanie, solemnly, "if I were capable of seeing them."

"But," said Rupert, "it is not even necessary to be a friend or acquaintance; dead strangers appear sometimes, requesting commiseration for their unhappy state, or for the purpose of relating some interesting family history.....or murder.....ghosts are the greatest gossips imaginable!"

"And you really and truly believe this!" said Cyrilla, turning to her sister.

"I believe that those persons who die without having been very wicked, but yet having so little religious feeling that they are not fit for heaven, are in a certain degree still bound to the earth. I think their spirits float in the air around us until they are prepared for a better world."

"Some must float a confoundedly long time, I suspect," murmured Rupert; but even while he spoke, he looked merrily towards Melanie, raised his champagne glass, and slightly bowed.

"A most disagreeable idea," said Cyrilla; "I now don't wonder at her being afraid to remain in a room alone."

"The belief in the apparitions of living friends is much more agreeable," observed Rupert.

"But do not such apparitions denote that the person who appears will soon be numbered among the dead?" asked Cyrilla.

"Not necessarily: that idea has rather gone out of fashion, and the newest discoveries have proved these apparitions to be emanations from the nerves. They are now known by the name of nervous spirits: ask Melanie."

But Melanie was talking earnestly in a low voice to Zorndorff, and did not hear the appeal.

"O, Rupert, I think you are inventing," cried Cyrilla.

"Not in the least, I assure you. For instance,

suppose I feel an earnest desire, a desperate longing to see you, my nervous spirit, or the spirit of my nerves, releases itself from my long legs and body, and I appear to you as a gray shadow, or even with the colours of life, according to your capability for discerning apparitions: my appearance under such circumstances does not make it necessary that I should die the first convenient opportunity afterwards; but I believe I must be ill, or in a delicate state of health, or.....no.....you must be ill, or nervous, or something of that kind, in order to be able to see me. Let us ask Melanie; she will be delighted to explain, if we have time and patience to listen to the exordium."

Melanie was once more appealed to; and though at first unwilling to speak, a few judicious questions from Rupert, asked in a serious information-seeking manner, joined to the entreaties of the Bellegardes, at length prevailed, and lowering her voice that it might not reach her husband's ears, she began: "There was a time when I also thought a disbelief of ghosts, or a disavowal of any belief I might occasionally feel, a matter of necessity—a proof of a certain degree of cultivation of mind.....I am not ashamed to acknowledge that that time is past, that I have grown humbler, and am now ready to believe things to be probable and possible which were for-

merly to me as well as to others unceasing subjects of ridicule."

"Charmante, charmante, comme elle parle!" exclaimed the Vicomte de Rubigny, really charmed with her animated countenance, but totally unable to follow in German the sense of what she was saying.

"How often," continued Melanie, "have occurrences which appeared incredible proved in the end natural phenomena!"

"O, we are quite ready to believe anything of that kind," said Rupert; "tell us something about the apparitions of living people."

"You must agree with me in some other things first," said Melanie, smiling. "Allow that there are few human beings who have not, in the course of their lives, had a prophetic dream, a warning, or at least made use of some sympathetic remedy, which is equivalent to an acknowledgment of a belief in its efficacy."

"But such things have nothing to do with apparitions," said Rupert.

"I think they have: these dreams, warnings, remedies, come under the denomination of popular superstitions, which you accuse Kerner of reviving."

"You never can forgive my having said that Kerner's spectres were bad style.....decidedly vulgar!"

“Kerner has not invented,” rejoined Melanie, “he has related simply what he heard. No one doubts that he could have easily made a more interesting and poetical narrative of his ‘Somnambulist,’ had he been so disposed; but he preferred conscientiously writing down her very words, and as she could have no motive for deceiving him, why should we not believe her visions, when there is nothing in them that may not be reconciled with the most sublime conceptions that religion can form of a world of spirits, for instance that dark state of those wandering ghosts.....”

“Never mind *them*, dear Melanie,” said Rupert, “but come to the apparitions—the emanations from our nerves that waft our presence, as you so beautifully express it, like the perfume of a flower, to those at a distance from us.....all the while we and the flowers yielding our emanations without diminution of size or colour.”

“I knew you intended to laugh at me.....” began Melanie; but at that moment a carriage drove rapidly past the open windows; and on her recognising it as one of Rupert’s she whispered: “It is the magnetizer; I believe I ought to go to him.”

“That would be very kind of you,” said Rupert; “and,” he added, detaining her a moment as she passed him, “if you want my assistance for

any of the wonders to be performed, I promise not to betray you for six whole weeks."

"Incorrigible unbeliever!" she answered, laughing. "If there were any juggling in the business, you would be sure to make a blunder to procure a laugh; but there is none. Edouard says they require nothing but an arm-chair, a table, and cards."

"Still I think I might make myself useful in giving hints or winks in a quiet sort of way. I assure you I am not such a donkey as you suppose."

"Just don't you concern yourself at all about this matter," said Melanie, "but follow me with these people as soon as they have done eating ices and bon-bons."

Although a belief in animal magnetism* was scarcely more prevalent in Germany than in England at that time, and notwithstanding the determined distrust with which people generally spoke of appearances not to be satisfactorily explained by any effort of the five senses, the natural tendency of the German mind to indulge in close and subtle meditation, and to seize any subject likely to procure a

* The reader curious on such subjects is requested to bear in mind that in 1831 the words "Animal Magnetism" &c., &c., had not been pronounced incorrect by Reichenbach, nor had the new force called *Odyle* been discovered by him. We may, it is to be hoped, continue to use the words familiar to every one, until others equally comprehensible or incomprehensible have been substituted.

field for sophistical disquisitions, made the appearance of the magnetizer be hailed almost with acclamation ; at least a noise beyond the sound of murmuring voices was heard, as the intelligence of his arrival spread from table to table, and room to room. The words magnetism, mesmerism, magnetic sleep, visions, &c., &c., which became more and more audible, were uttered in every variety of tone, and with a sort of enthusiasm by most of the female part of the company ; for women are naturally inclined towards all that is mysterious and wonderful, and more prone to what gives free scope to conjecture than to what incites to investigation. These circumstances may have combined to create an interest in the magnetizer ; but the greatest incentive of all was fashion. The appearance of Kerner's work had just then awakened the slumbering recollections of Mesmer and his followers ; the decision of the *Société de Médecine* was forgotten ; accounts of astonishing cures performed by somnambulists, and of extraordinary prophecies and visions, had reached the inhabitants of Exfort from time to time ; the " Sphinx, or new Archive for Animal Magnetism," was again read ; and now.....now, for the first time, a real somnambulist, and one, too, who had exhibited (that was the word used) with unbounded applause in the salons of Paris, was to perform for them ! It would have been difficult to

have satisfied the expectations of the assembly ; but “ after all,” as Rupert observed to Cyrilla, “ it is of no importance, provided they can amuse themselves until the ball-room be lighted.”

The *Salon* became by degrees full—we must say by degrees, for Melanie’s friends, the *crème de la crème*, taking advantage of their intimacy, retired to her rooms to change their morning costumes for the lightest and freshest ball dresses imaginable, thereby, as they intended, effectually distinguishing themselves from the rest of the company for the remainder of the evening. It is astonishing how much displeasure and annoyance this little stratagem caused, or how much it added to the unpopularity of the perpetrators of it. Among themselves much more unreserved and quite as good-natured and affectionate as other people, they appeared to those who did not belong to their coterie, haughty, arrogant, heartless, and determined not to have anything in common with the rest of the society, of whom the younger female part suddenly found their crape or chip bonnets intolerably heavy and warm, and an emigration to one of the remote apartments commenced, where several fantastic pyramids of them were hastily erected on the sofas and chairs. Mothers and chaperones, after a few dissatisfied whispers, resigned themselves to the comforts of the broad elastic causeuses or divans,

and nodded their heads and plumed bonnets with persevering dignity.

One group of men surrounded Zorndorff, another the President, and the different opinions for and against the belief in mesmeric sleep were attacked and defended with wit and acuteness; the result apparently being that the incredulous understanding remained in most cases deaf to all the offered metaphysical or mystical suggestions, and seemed determined to yield to nothing but palpable or ocular demonstration.

At length Melanie appeared—dignified, but evidently in a state bordering on beatitude. She was followed by the somnambulist, a very young, slight, pale, and gentleman-like man. He spoke a few words to the magnetizer, then seated himself in the chair placed for him in the middle of the room, and the business immediately commenced. In a few minutes he began to turn and twist himself uneasily, moved his arms, stretched out his legs, turned up his eyes until the white alone was visible, then rolled them lustreless around, and finally closed them altogether: his body became quieter, and at length his head found a resting-place against the well stuffed side of the chair. The magnetizer now commenced a series of movements as if he were throwing something at him, and by means of these and the assistance of a good deal of

friction the left arm was put into a state of total inflexibility. The company were requested to compare the pulses of the two arms; several persons did so, and declared that that of the left was almost extinct. The operations now commenced on the legs, which were put into a similar state of rigidity, and afforded the persons who chose to make the trial an apparently strong though somewhat elastic seat. The sleeper seemed to suffer extremely during these experiments, and to feel a relief similar to an awakening from nightmare when they ceased.

His eyes were then bound, and cards placed on a table beside him. One partner succeeded the other from the rows of eager spectators, and the game began after the players had, by pressing his hand, given him a sign of sympathy. The cards of the somnambulist lay in a heap, yet he generally chose them judiciously; when he made a mistake, which did not often occur, trembling violently and becoming impatient; but he almost always won, and at last played at a distance, and turned away from his opponent.

After the card-playing came the reading of closed or at least so folded letters that the contents were invisible, and many were read with extraordinary fluency. A few remarks about the peculiarities of the manner of writing and orthog-

raphy causing much amusement. All this finished expertness, however, failed to convince those predetermined not to believe, and their doubts were strengthened when a few more carefully folded papers seemed to puzzle the unfortunate being who had allowed himself to be exhibited for their amusement.

Almost every one had written something, and wished to have it read, in order to remove or confirm the doubts which they unreservedly expressed. No one would believe the testimony of another, so great was the fear of being imposed on. To this murmuring multitude were opposed a small and resolute band of enthusiasts, who would not listen to an expression of suspicion or hesitation, and appeared quite overpowered by astonishment and admiration at every well-played card and every line that was correctly deciphered.

At length the company began to crowd round the somnambulist and overwhelm him with questions, the answers to which, like those of the oracles of old, admitted of various interpretations; but the President, who had at first looked on with rigid attention, now began to exhibit some impatience; he approached Melanie, and whispered authoritatively, "We have had enough of this trifling, put an end to it as soon as you can!" then turning to Professor Huber, who was standing near him, he ob-

served, "I have seen these useless performances with cards and letters with a good deal less pleasure than those of an expert juggler. I wish to be surprised by the juggler, and make little or no effort to understand what I see; here I try to understand, and can do nothing but suspect charlatanry."

"I perceive your Excellency doubts the realities of magnetic relations and magnetic sleep?"

"I acknowledge myself incapable of giving an opinion," answered the President. "The question embraces physiological and psychological phenomena that deserve investigation; but I prefer leaving the elucidation to men of science, and totally disapprove of working on the nerves or imagination of partially diseased bodies or minds for the purpose of satisfying frivolous curiosity, or affording temporary amusement."

Rupert, who had during the whole time looked on and listened with an attention that had both surprised and gratified Melanie, now walked towards her and whispered, "Extremely well got up; I am so much obliged to you!" As she indignantly prepared to answer him, he moved away, and she was soon surrounded by those who either agreed with her in opinion, or deemed it necessary to say something civil, learned, or wise, on the occasion.

There were also a select few, who nodded their

heads, looked solemn, and came to the conclusion among themselves that the young man's capabilities were not to be compared to those whose magnetic sleep came without the assistance of art.

The sound of music from the ball-room put an end to all the discussions, and the rest of the evening was spent there. Zorndorff, though he scarcely ever danced, took advantage of Rupert's being less at liberty than usual, and immediately engaged Cyrilla. A very few minutes sufficed to renew their intimacy and good understanding. Without any explanation, he became precisely what he had been before she had quitted Exfort; and, perfectly satisfied with her sister's communication, she cared not how long the present state of pleasing perplexity continued.

It was at a late, or rather early hour, that the last carriage, containing the Bellegardes, drove away. The President had retired to rest at his usual time; and as Melanie, Cyrilla, and Rupert passed together through the "banquet-halls deserted," they discovered Zorndorff stretched on one of the stone benches in the balcony, apparently watching the gradual approach of day.

"Handsome fellow!" observed Rupert in a low voice to his cousins; "what a pity it is he cannot or will not enjoy life like other people! Zorndorff," he added, walking towards him, "you will

find a better bed below stairs, and I recommend your trying it."

"Thank you," he replied, slowly rising; "I intend to accept your often proffered hospitality for a few days. This house is too gay to be willingly changed for my lonely apartments."

"That is the most sensible speech I have heard you make for a long time," said Rupert. "These déjeuners are famous things; I should not have any objection to have one every week!"

CHAPTER XIV.

"I AM sorry to perceive that Edouard is one of those people who make it a point never to be in time for breakfast," observed the President to Cyrilla one morning as they met at an early hour. "I almost expect he will at last order his coffee to be taken to his room, that he may smoke as he does when at home. If he had been living in my house during his youth, he would never have acquired such habits."

"And yet," said Cyrilla, smiling, "you allow Melanie to breakfast in her room, and she has done so in your house for more than twelve years."

"Twelve years and some months; but let me tell you, Cyrilla, if she had begun this habit *eleven* years and some months ago, I should never have permitted it. Twelve years ago, Melanie was very young and very beautiful, and I was neither, but

very much in love; and consequently, for the time being, an indulgent, idolizing fool!"

"I cannot imagine you very much in love," said Cyrilla, as her eyes passed from the tall unpliant form, to the pale severe face, of her brother-in-law; "in fact, I cannot fancy you at all in love."

"I am glad to hear it; as, from what I have just said, I may infer that you cannot imagine me a fool. But here comes Rupert; he has been up and out some hours. I do not know which is most to be admired—his active habits, or happy buoyancy of temperament."

"I did not think that he was at all a person you would admire," said Cyrilla.

"And what sort of person *did* you think I should admire?"

Cyrilla felt his piercing eyes were upon her. She wished to name Zorndorff, but feared not being able to pronounce his name with sufficient indifference, so she remained silent; and, after waiting in vain for an answer, he continued—

"Yes, Cyrilla; I admire Rupert almost as much as I do you. I never saw two people more like in person, mind, and disposition, than you are."

"Our relationship makes the resemblance very natural," said Cyrilla, while she beckoned to Rupert, who just then perceived her.

"The relationship might be nearer," began the President.

"I wish it were," said Cyrilla.

"Well, that's candid," he rejoined, with a mixed look of surprise and satisfaction.

"Good morning, dear Rupert!" she cried, bounding towards him, and placing her arm within his; "I have just been saying how I wish you were my brother."

"Humph!" murmured the President, "that was not at all what I meant."

They had all breakfasted, and Cyrilla was standing at the window, throwing crumbs of bread to the birds assembled on the gravel beneath, when Zorndorff appeared.

"At last!" exclaimed the President, looking at his watch, "and always *the* last."

"I suppose I remained too long in my bath," answered Zorndorff, as he seated himself at the deserted table.

"Yours was not like Rupert's, in the lake, I suspect."

"Certainly not; for however the lake might tempt me on a sultry afternoon, I greatly prefer warm or at least tepid water in the morning, especially when I can have it by walking but a few steps from my dressing-room."

"I expect the carriage every moment," said the President impatiently, as he looked out of the win-

dow, apparently a little provoked at his nephew's dilatory manner of playing with his cup and spoon ; " but, perhaps, you have no urgent business in Exfort to-day ? "

" I have most urgent, most important business, " answered Zorndorff, rising without having helped himself to any of the various things pushed towards him by Rupert ; " and the sooner we can be off the better satisfied I shall be. "

" Oh there is time enough for you to eat your breakfast, " said the President, softened by what he supposed a deference to his wishes, " a time for everything, you know. "

" There may be time, but there is no inclination in the present case...I cannot eat. "

" But you are not ill, I hope, Edouard ? "

" In the sense you mean, no ; but I have been suffering mental tortures for some time past that would deprive a more robust man than I am of all appetite. "

" Perhaps, " said Rupert laughing, " Seltzer water and Hochheimer would relieve your mental sufferings, at least that is what our assistant surgeon prescribes ; you remember Wickmann, he studied with us at Jena ? "

" He must be greatly changed if his prescriptions are worth much, " answered Zorndorff ; " but at all events I feel more inclined to consult a homœopath than any other on the present occa-

sion." He turned to Cyrilla as he spoke, totally unconscious that Melanie had made all he had said more intelligible to her than he perhaps would have wished.

To his uncle his case had become as clear as if it had been stated on parchment with all the formal technicalities of what English lawyers call a *brief*, and as his carriage rolled under the portico he prepared to favour his nephew with an "*opinion*."

The pony phaeton had been driven to the door at the same time, and while Zorndorff watched with slightly contracted brows Cyrilla's childish eagerness to seize the reins, and Rupert's laughing remonstrances at the experiments which she immediately tried with them, his uncle laid his hand heavily on his shoulder and whispered, "Come, we have business to transact, and have no time for such fooleries."

Zorndorff turned away, and when seated by his uncle listened with quiet attention to the above-mentioned "*opinion*," which was given concisely and clearly.

"I quite agree with you," he said in reply, "and have little doubt that Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron intends to marry her cousin Rupert, for, as you justly observe, no two people can better suit each other." After a pause he added, "I have known many women more beautiful, much more

beautiful than she is ; any one so perfectly accomplished, so fascinating, I never even imagined."

"Strong language, Edouard—Let me recommend your not returning to Freilands."

"I had some such idea myself a few days ago ; but, after all, I do not see why my probable marriage to a very different sort of woman at some future period should prevent me in the meantime from enjoying the society of others, ay, and admiring them too ! I find I can get over paroxysms of admiration in a most satisfactory manner ; for instance, the other day at that ball or déjeuner, as I looked at the Vicomtesse de Rubigny, I wondered what on earth I had ever found to admire about her ; it was certainly not her sallow complexion or....."

"No," said the President, interrupting him ; "but in that instance you must not forget that your admiration was cooled by—scorn."

"Scorn?"

"Why, yes—she scorned, not you most probably but—your poverty ; and like a true Lindesmar, turned to Rupert as the best *parti* to be had."

"And if the world may be believed," said Zorn-dorff with a bitter smile, "she was in her turn scorned by him in the most unceremonious manner too, and was glad to take refuge with her French relations and marry a worthless cousin, who little

knew the way in which she had previously trifled with her reputation."

"All this may be true," said the President, "but is totally uninteresting to us. Let me advise you to be satisfied with the really splendid position offered you, and not to waste your time longing for what is altogether out of your reach."

"You think that Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron would also scorn a poor Kammer assessor?"

"I think she is too amiable and too gentle to scorn any one; but you are both poor, and....."

"Excuse me for interrupting you," cried Zorndorff eagerly, "but I really must ask you if you have ever perceived anything in her manner to make you think that....."

"And do you excuse me," said his uncle severely, "for never having taken the trouble to make any observations about what can in no way concern either of us. This, however, I *can* tell you, that Rupert does not scorn his cousin or she him; and that being the case, the best thing you can do is to get over this paroxysm of admiration, as you call it, with all convenient expedition, for as surely as he deprived you of the bright glances of Virginie's dark eyes, so surely will he obtain the still brighter smiles of my fair sister-in-law."

Zorndorff sank back in the corner of the carriage, and when he spoke again it was on matters of

business, which made the President imagine that his well meant advice had altogether turned the current of his nephew's thoughts, and even led him to hope that the affair was not so serious as he had at first supposed. Of all men in the world a thoroughbred bureaucratist is the most injudicious adviser on an occasion of this kind ; such a man gives an opinion of a case of love as he would of a case of law, without taking the feelings of the parties concerned in the least degree into consideration. The President felt perfectly convinced that he had in a dignified manner pronounced sentence of death on his nephew's inclinations, quite unconscious that the words he had last spoken had not only piqued Zorndorff's jealousy, but also turned his still struggling ambition into a new channel—his passion for Cyrilla and wish to supersede Rupert, his rival in childhood, boyhood, and manhood, became identified ; and while listening with apparent interest to his uncle as he expatiated on his proposed reformatations in different departments of his jurisdiction, he was in fact meditating on a complete change of all his plans, and determining that no obstacle should now induce him to waver in his resolution—no sacrifice should be too great were Cyrilla to be obtained by it.

CHAPTER XV.

As Rupert's leave of absence began to draw to a close, the gaieties at Freilands increased ; one dinner party succeeded another with so little intermission that at length the Bellegardes and some others laughingly declared their intention of coming regularly from Exfort every morning, and spending the day there, and the plan was carried into execution, Rupert merely stipulating that his drives with his cousin in the pony-phaeton should not be interfered with.

Cyrilla had long been conscious that she was unremittingly watched by Zorndorff ; and, though she nearly guessed the reason, she made no effort to contradict, by word or manner, what Melanie had said of her. There was something too earnest in his character to allow her to suppose that he would re-

main at Freilands without any fixed purpose, and she therefore felt no uneasiness, and rather avoided anything that might lead to an explanation, though she had observed that from the time that the Bellegardes and their coterie had invaded the house, he had scarcely spoken a word to her.

Melanie and her friends spent many hours every day in the often-mentioned balcony, shaded from the sun by an awning, the glass doors communicating with the reception-rooms, open and surrounded by exotic shrubs and flowers, ever green, ever fresh, a single drooping bough or a few withered leaves causing their immediate removal to the conservatory whence they came, while others, healthier and brighter, supplied their places, and administered to the luxury of those who, spoiled by habit, scarcely bestowed a glance on them, or were conscious of enjoyment, as they inhaled their perfume.

The weather had become sultry; the few clouds visible seemed at times almost stationary, and not the faintest breath of wind was perceptible. All walking or boating parties had been necessarily deferred until late in the afternoon; and, leisurely sipping their coffee, the arrangements for them were discussed in the low languid tones which suited the half-reclining forms whence they proceeded. Rupert had promised to show a hermitage which was on one of the islands in the lake, to Madame de

Rubigny. Cyrilla had agreed to accompany them : " That is," she added, " if you give me time to write to mamma ; I want to tell her that the President has proposed my going with him and Melanie to Aix-la-Chapelle."

" To Aix !" exclaimed Madame de Bellegarde. " So, Melanie, you are going to Aix again ?"

" Yes ; don't you envy me ?"

" Cela dépend ! Count Zorndorff of course goes with you ?"

" He may join us.....perhaps.....," replied Melanie, looking irresolutely towards Zorndorff, who gave no sign either of assent or dissent.

" And we," cried Madame de Bellegarde, " have nothing at all in prospect but a visit to grandpapa. I am so sorry you are going away—Exfort is so dull without you.....but I shall be perfectly inconsolable when Freilands is shut up.....I wonder Rupert does not leave the army, and live here altogether.....so near the town, and everything one could wish !"

" I have latterly been thinking a little on the subject," said Rupert, who was displaying considerable skill while playing with a cup and ball.

" Have you ?" said Melanie, looking up with some surprise, " I never could understand at all why you became a soldier."

" It is easily told," answered Rupert. " I en-

tered the army to get away from my aunt—perhaps too in order to have a right to wear a hussar's uniform, to which I took a fancy at a review. I have remained in it because it gives me occupation, and I like my brother officers, and live in the hopes of making a campaign or two before I.....a.....”

“Marry!” said Madame de Bellegarde, laughing; “I wish you would do so soon, and settle here: the idea that this is our last day at Freilands is quite dreadful! Must you leave to-morrow?”

“Yes; but our regiment will probably be quartered at Exfort in a year or two.”

“A year or two! Why, that's an eternity!”

“To me also,” said Melanie, “it appears a long time to wait before we are likely to have Rupert with us again, and I confess.....”

“And I confess,” said Cyrilla, as she rose to leave them, “that I shall be very angry if I have to wait two years before I see him again.”

Rupert followed her, still playing with his cup and ball, and said, in a voice only audible to her and to Zorndorff, who now stood at a window reading a letter: “Cyrilla, you have only to say that you wish me to leave the army, and I am ready to do so, and give up for your sake all chance of a campaign.”

“All chance of being shot, you mean,” said Cyrilla, laughing.

“Perhaps so ; but as the sacrifice is greater than you seem to imagine, I must tell you that I can only do so on condition.....”

“I hate conditions,” said Cyrilla, moving on.

“But you may as well listen to them.....”

“Impossible ! Why, have I not told you that I must write to mamma about going to Aix, and after that you are to row me in the boat, you know ; and then.....but I really wish you would go out with Madame de Rubigny, and return for me an hour hence. Do you know that this Virginie, about whom you were in doubt whether she were a devil or an angel, seems to have so little likeness to Satan, that I begin to think you a hard-hearted, cruel wretch to have remained insensible to.....”

“Cyrilla !” cried Rupert reproachfully.

“Tell me the whole story, and I promise never to tease you again,” she continued ; “but if you leave me to compose a romance of my own about you, I believe I must suppose that you preferred her sister Julie.....taste is perverse sometimes !”

“Do you really mean what you say ?” asked Rupert, with unusual seriousness.

“No, I don’t,” she answered, smiling merrily ; “for though I *might* have consented to your marriage with Virginie, were she still unmarried, I must tell you that I can never permit you to give

me such a cousin as Julie de Lindesmar; and now go away and let me write my letter."

He left her, and for nearly an hour silence reigned in the room to which she had retired; at the end of that time the sound of voices and retreating footsteps made her suppose that the balcony party had broken up, and from the window she could see some sauntering groups moving down the lime-tree walk. She folded and sealed her letter, and once more looking out of the window, she perceived Zorndorff alone, walking backwards and forwards near the house,—a black-edged, black-sealed letter, which she had seen him receive some hours before, in his hand. He read it again and again, and then walking a short distance down the alley, he threw himself on one of the seats and covered his face with his hand.

There is nothing in this world which enhances the value of any object we possess, or wish to possess, whether it be animate or inanimate, like the fear of losing it for ever. This fear had now taken possession of Zorndorff's mind with regard to Cyrilla. He had overheard what Rupert had said to her,—perceived with surprise that she was still quite unconscious of her cousin's intentions, and imagined that his last and only chance now was to speak before his rival. Under the influence of one of those ungovernable passions which make men for

the time regardless of obstacles, and careless of the pain inflicted on others, he had latterly only been deterred from doing so by uncertainty respecting her feelings ; but even while half provoked at finding so much self-possession in one so young and child-like in appearance, he admired the very quality which caused his perplexity. When he saw her enter the alley on her way to her cousin, his only thought was how to induce her to stop and speak to him. The most natural thing he could have done would have been to have accompanied her to the lake. It never occurred to him, or he might have asked her some question about Melanie or the others who had not gone out. He never thought of it; so completely had his usual calm consideration forsaken him, that she had actually passed before he was able to exclaim, hurriedly, "Don't go to him.....pray, don't go to him!"

"Not go to him, after he has waited so long for me?"

"Waited! oh no.....he has been to the island with Madame de Rubigny, and has not yet returned in her society he is not likely to take much note of time."

Cyrilla stopped and smiled. "I should like," she said quietly, "I should like very much to know what it is that people find so very fascinating in

Madame de Rubigny ; she is interesting-looking, certainly—in fact, handsome.....”

“No,” said Zorndorff, “she is not at all handsome.”

“You say so,” she rejoined, “because you happen not to be one of her admirers.”

“I *was* one of them,” said Zorndorff ; and he observed with pleasure that his companion turned suddenly towards him with a look of inquiry and attention,—“but,” he added quickly, “not long.”

“I heard she was very agreeable,” said Cyrilla, “and expected to find her more.....what shall I say?—more talkative.”

“She never talked more than she does now in general conversation,” he replied ; “but in a *tête-à-tête* she was, and is still most probably, what her husband would call *adorable*. Her real or pretended ingenuousness.....”

“Ingenuousness!” repeated Cyrilla, “and I have never discovered a particle of anything resembling it!”

“I believe,” said Zorndorff, “you never have seen what she can be ; she is one of those women whose words and looks are reserved for our sex..... Adlerkron could tell you enough about her if he chose.”

“But he does n’t choose,” said Cyrilla, seating

herself at the other end of the seat ; “ and I feel a great deal of natural curiosity on the subject. I suspect she married M. de Rubigny without caring much for him, and am almost sure she would have preferred Rupert.”

“ No doubt of it,” said Zorndorff, with a contemptuous smile ; “ she almost lost her reputation in her efforts to induce him to marry her.....but whether actuated by love or interest is unknown ; I suspect the latter.”

“ I do not know her well enough to undertake her defence,” said Cyrilla ; “ but you must acknowledge that Rupert might easily be loved for himself alone.”

“ Not by a Lindesmar, believe me, Mademoiselle d’Adlerkron, and I know them long and well ; but why blame them for acting as others do ?—others from whom we might expect something quite different !”

Just then Cyrilla perceived in the distance Rupert’s boat. She rose, and waved her handkerchief.

“ Do not be in such a hurry, you see he is resting on his oars ; the boat is not moving—he—he is not thinking of you—now.”

Again Cyrilla waved her handkerchief, and the boat shot forward in the direction of the landing-place. She looked towards Zorndorff ; he appeared

a good deal agitated, but the expression of his face was incomprehensible to her, as one last violent struggle between love and ambition, poverty and wealth, passion and principle, took place in his mind. He crushed, with both hands and unconscious vehemence, the mourning letter, and its great black seal, and as her eye fell on the latter, it suddenly occurred to her that he might have lost some relation or friend. The letter had evidently contained painful intelligence; he was unhappy. A woman's sympathy with domestic grief is as ready as her feelings under such trials are acute. Cyrilla turned back, and the look of kind unembarrassed interest with which she again approached him, renewed all his doubts, and he scarcely listened to what she said until, with some hesitation, she added, "Though I can only speak at random, perhaps Melanie could....."

"Could what?" he asked impatiently.

"Could offer you some consolation, if you were to tell her the contents of that letter, which seems to have affected you so painfully."

"Can Melanie control the inclinations of people she has never seen? Can she influence the affections of those nearest to her?" he asked, and again his head sunk on his hand. "Go, and leave me more than ever a prey to the jealousy that has already almost tortured me to death."

“ I.....I thought you had lost some friend,” said Cyrilla, glancing towards the letter ; “ and you are only jealous !”

“ *Only* jealous !” he repeated, looking up ; “ but do you know of whom ?”

Cyrilla shook her head.

“ Of Adlerkron, who seems born to cross my purposes, mar my prospects, and destroy my only chance of future happiness !”

“ I do not comprehend,” began Cyrilla, not a thought of Rupert and herself combining themselves in her mind.

“ And you do not know what I mean when I say that I am jealous,—*only* jealous—but *very* jealous ;” and Zorndorff raised his flashing eyes to hers, just as Rupert, at the end of the alley, raised a flag as signal of his arrival at the boat-house.

She waved her handkerchief twice in answer,—Zorndorff sprang from his seat, caught her hand as it descended, and exclaimed with vehemence,—

“ Can you not, or will you not, understand me ?”

Impatiently releasing her hand, she cast a hurried glance towards the windows of the house ; the tacit reproach was felt ; he moved to the furthest end of the seat murmuring some words of excuse ; and such is the command of looks and gestures acquired by constant intercourse with the world,

that these two persons, both in a state of violent internal agitation, suddenly assumed an appearance of calmness, almost indifference, so powerfully had a few gay-coloured parasols protruding beyond the balcony reminded them that they were acting a scene in the drama of their lives, which, however tragically it might affect them, would most assuredly be viewed as comedy by the laughter-loving unwished-for spectators above them.

At this moment a couple of Rupert's dogs, evidently just escaped from confinement, came bounding towards them,—never had these emblems of fidelity appeared more opportunely. As Zorndorff's hand apparently caressed the sleek head of one of them, his jealousy, uncertainty, hope, fear, and love, found words of potent eloquence; and Cyrilla, while gently restraining the wild gambols of the other, very nearly concealed the anxiety which oppressed her. When he paused for an answer, and looked at her expectantly, she bent her head over Carlo's so as to hide her deep blushes from Zorndorff, as she faltered out hurriedly, but to his attentive ear quite distinctly, all he most desired to hear. One furtive glance he bestowed on the balcony, and then stood with his hat slightly raised above his head as she walked quickly down the avenue, followed by both dogs.

Had not Cyrilla been extremely preoccupied,

she would have immediately observed that Rupert was remarkably grave and quiet, and Madame de Rubigny even more taciturn than usual. A sign from him made both dogs spring into the boat, and crouch under the seats,—Cyrilla took the rudder in silence, and not one word was spoken until they reached the little wooden quay, where Rupert fastened the boat: the Vicomtesse de Rubigny, without looking up, declared her intention of remaining in it. Cyrilla stepped on shore, and when out of hearing observed: "You and Madame de Rubigny seem to have been quarrelling."

"No; but we have had a sort of explanation."

"The same, perhaps, with which you unintentionally favoured me when we met at Berlin."

"Very nearly. What a provoking memory you have! another would have forgotten all about it by this time."

"I have heard enough since from others to make me remember,—they say she married M. de Rubigny without caring in the least for him."

"So she told me just now."

"Told you?"

"Yes; but you need not look so shocked. If other people told you, why should not she tell me?"

"For a great many reasons; and though not

exactly shocked, I confess I am rather surprised at her telling you what I, your cousin, would *not* tell you in her place."

"Though you are my cousin, Cyrilla, we have been nearly strangers to each other until the last two months,—with Virginie I have been intimate all my life."

"I was not aware of that," said Cyrilla, thoughtfully.

"Since my earliest childhood I have known the Lindesmars, and frequented their house; their brother Victor was my friend and schoolfellow until he went to his uncle in France, when I some way seemed to take his place in his family; and all the follies of Adrienne de Bellegarde, all the devilry of Julie de Lindesmar, are as well known to me as if they had been really my sisters. Virginie, about my own age, and more my companion than any of them, I never could quite understand; but I believe her to be infinitely superior to the others in every respect."

"I suppose she told you that it was the letter you wrote at her mother's request which induced her to marry the Vicomte?"

"Something to that effect, and the idea is not agreeable."

"I cannot at all understand a woman marrying

from pique," said Cyrilla, "and yet one hears of it so often. Nothing would induce me to marry a man I did not love."

"It is hard to say how one would act until the day of trial comes," answered Rupert; "however, you are never likely to be tried as poor dear Virginie has been."

"But," said Cyrilla, "would it not have been better for her to have waited for a year or two, and at the end of that time she might have found some one she could like quite as well as you?"

"Unfortunately," replied Rupert, slightly shrugging his shoulders, "she will not believe in the possibility of a second love:—you do, it seems."

Cyrilla did not answer.

"You do not like the question when put directly to yourself," said Rupert, laughing.

"I rather wish to avoid discussions of this kind," said Cyrilla slowly, "as I don't like talking about what I do not understand."

"You understand as much about the matter as I do, perhaps; an interchange of thoughts might between us be as profitable as—as—amusing."

"Well, then," began Cyrilla, "I can imagine a man loving several times....."

"So can I," said Rupert, "in fact continually, until—until—he is married, when, of course, he comes to a full stop either from choice or necessity."

Cyrilla looked up inquiringly.

"Why, you know, either he likes his wife too well to think of any other woman, or, what nearly comes to the same thing, other women cease to think of him because he has got a wife."

Cyrilla smiled.

"And now tell me, can you imagine a woman loving several times?"

"Don't ask me."

"But I must—that is what I most want to know."

"One hears and reads of such things," began Cyrilla.

"I don't want to know what one hears of or reads, I wish to know what you think possible or probable."

"So much," replied Cyrilla, "depends upon circumstances over which we have no control."

"Agreed," cried Rupert; "but you are giving your opinion so unwillingly, that you must allow me to suppose some of these circumstances. Suppose, for instance, a woman's love were slighted?"

"In that case, she should conceal and conquer it," answered Cyrilla quickly.

"And love again?"

"It is to be hoped so."

"And were the person loved unworthy of regard

“Fortunately,” said Cyrilla laughing, “a woman’s imagination, in such cases, supplies all deficiencies, and nothing but facts, plain downright facts, can ever convince her of what she must be so unwilling to believe.”

“Then,” cried Rupert, with heightened colour, “then let us leave nothing to the imagination, but suppose at once, that a man returns a woman’s love—gives her his heart because he cannot help himself, but from egotistical interested motives bestows his hand on another—what then?”

“Egotistical interested motives,” repeated Cyrilla, “there may be some who could pardon—and excuse even that—I could not. I should despise—I am afraid almost hate—but why do we talk of such disagreeable things, and you really look as if you were quite in earnest. Ah, there’s the new arbour—how pretty! but it will require at least two years before the creepers have covered the top of it. I suppose,” she added, gaily, “I suppose it was here you waited for me with Madame de Rubigny, and it was here she filled your head with all those dreadful thoughts about slighted love and desertion?”

“Exactly; she prophesied me all the horrors of being slighted.”

“I don’t think you have much to fear on that score,” said Cyrilla; “the President gave Melanie to understand, that your too great *succes auprès des*

dames had caused our uncle Gottfried great uneasiness."

"Pshaw—nonsense."

"Don't break off the branches of that honeysuckle," she cried, pushing his hand away from the plant; "the whole summer will not repair the mischief you have done. Next year when you return here, this jessamine will be at least as tall as I am!"

"Perhaps so," he replied absently.

And they walked on silently, until between the trees he caught a glimpse of the boat and Madame de Rubigny reclining listlessly in the stern. "She has a great deal of observation, and may be right," he observed.

"Who?" asked Cyrilla, looking up with a puzzled air; her thoughts (and unrequited love was not among them) had wandered from the island—"Whom do you mean?"

"Virginie."

"I daresay she has a good deal of observation," said Cyrilla, making an effort to be interested in what seemed to have in some way taken possession of her cousin's mind; "most intelligent people who are silent in company, are observant of all that is going on about them."

"Then," rejoined Rupert, "perhaps a remark of hers may interest you."

"Perhaps it may; let me hear it."

"She has discovered that Zorndorff is irretrievably in love with you."

"Has she?" said Cyrilla, stooping to gather some flowers; "and do you know what I have discovered?"

"The same thing, perhaps," said Rupert.

"No," replied Cyrilla, laughing, "I think it better to wait until I am told such things; but," she added in a whisper, as they approached the quay, "it has become evident to me that she is annoyed at our liking each other so much!"

"And *do* you like me?"

"Dearest Rupert, can you doubt it?" cried Cyrilla, as she lightly leaned on his arm and sprang into the boat.

The sultry day closed with a sunset of unusual brilliancy, and the last yellow rays played gaily on the bright summer dresses of the loungers on the balcony, as they watched the changing form of the gold-coloured clouds, and unreservedly regretted their approaching separation. Without exactly caring much for each other, their education, habits, and manners, were so similar, their position in the world so much the same, and they were in their determination to rule the society of Exfort so united, that all petty jealousies had ceased. They knew and laughed at each other's foibles without

hesitation, and were so very unreserved in their remarks and raillery, that Cyrilla, whose acquaintance with them was of recent date, not unfrequently experienced a confused feeling of apprehension, and dreaded nothing so much as becoming, if only for a day, the subject of their mirth. It had been this fear which had given her strength that morning to listen, apparently unmoved, to words of incalculable importance and interest, and had enabled her to answer them, and stake her life's happiness, without daring to bestow one glance on the man in whose hands she had resolved unreservedly to place it; and it was the same motive which now induced her, not only to listen, but to join in the desultory conversation which was carried on, though she longed to take refuge in her room to think over the momentous words she had spoken—the promise she had made without one thought of her mother,—that mother whose idol she had been all her life, and who, she more than suspected, would disapprove of an engagement that must necessarily be of some years' continuance, and the termination of which would be at best so far beneath her often expressed hopes and expectations. It was, therefore, with unmixed feelings of satisfaction, that Cyrilla saw the different carriages drive up before the house, and from the balcony watched the departures. As the last disappeared behind the

trees, and Rupert, having completed his cheerful *adieux*, turned into the house, Zorndorff approached her and said, "I intend to return home this evening, to—to write—some letters"

"And I," answered Cyrilla, "must also write—to my mother."

"Not until we have spoken—that is, consulted Melanie," he said eagerly; "to-morrow we shall meet without the restraint which has latterly been so intolerable to me." After a moment's pause and hesitation, he added, "I am sorry to be obliged to request you to let our engagement remain a secret for the present—it is absolutely necessary—unavoidable for some time at least;" and then, without waiting for an answer, he fervently but hastily pressed her hand to his lips, and turned to meet Rupert, whose voice he heard in the adjoining room. "Adieu, Adlerkron," he began, "we shall not meet again for some time, and therefore"

"And therefore," cried Rupert, interrupting him, "you think it incumbent on you to leave me twelve hours sooner than is necessary! Come—be sociable for once in your life, and remain here until after breakfast to-morrow."

"I cannot," replied Zorndorff; "there is a letter which must be sent to the post to-night....."

"Write here," cried Rupert, "and send an express into Exfort."

"The letter," said Zorndorff, unwillingly ; but, as if he thought it necessary to excuse himself in some way, "the letter is.....already written, and only requires date and seal.....but it is in my writing-desk at home, and I....."

"A letter written and put aside for consideration!" said Rupert. "That sounds mysterious, but will scarcely justify your abrupt departure, after having so far fulfilled your destiny as to remain here during the....."

"Fulfilled my destiny! What do you mean?"

"Come, don't pretend to have forgotten the time you had your *planet ruled*, or whatever the proper expression may be for having one's fortune told by the stars, instead of with a pack of cards! You look now as if you would rather you had not told me."

"O not at all," said Zorndorff; "but I am rather surprised at your remembering what I had altogether forgotten."

"What!" exclaimed Rupert, "have you forgotten that you are to be married twice? and that the year of the two 3's is to be one of danger to us both?"

"Nonsense," said Zorndorff, turning away, while a fearful paleness overspread his features, and even his lips were white when he spoke to his aunt.

"Edouard, you must tell me about this," she whispered, "some day when we are alone."

"I cannot remember—it is too long ago," he answered impatiently.

"He is ashamed of believing such things," continued Rupert, laughing; then, suddenly perceiving that Zorndorff looked annoyed, he added: "Yet greater men than he is have been.....credulous—actually and deliberately working out the predictions made them. Wallenstein, Duke of Friedland, for instance, whose astrologer was no less a person than Kepler himself! And then Napoleon, who, they say, not unfrequently consulted the famous Lenormaud."

"I could tell you a curious thing about that Mademoiselle Lenormaud," began Melanie; but Zorndorff hastily took leave, and though Rupert professed the greatest curiosity about it, she persisted in saying that "there was no use in telling him anything of that kind."

"Then," said Rupert, leaning over the back of her chair, and lowering his voice, so that his words were inaudible to the President; "then let me tell you something of another kind:—I—should—like to marry—Cyrilla."

"What!" cried Melanie, looking at him incredulously; "you don't mean to insinuate that you think seriously of marriage?"

"I don't insinuate, but say plainly, that I wish to marry Cyrilla, if she will consent. However, as

I don't want to take her by surprise, and have reason to suppose that she has never thought about me in that way, you had better talk to her to-night, and before morning she can make up her mind one way or other."

"Oh!" cried Melanie, "I am afraid.....that is, she.....oh, why did you not speak sooner?"

"Why, you know, or rather, perhaps, you do not know, that I had determined not to marry her, or indeed any one else, for ten years at least; and though I liked her from the first, it is only about a week ago that I discovered how much, and all that sort of thing; and now I wish I could carry her off at once, without any unnecessary talk or ceremony, for I don't at all like the idea of a separation."

Melanie gazed fixedly on the ground, and spoke not a word.

"Well," he added, after a moment's pause, "can you not say something—say, at least, that you approve—that you wish....."

"I wish," said Melanie, "I wish you had not remained so long in Berlin—I wish you had acted differently during the week we were there—I wish you had shown a little more *empressement* in the first instance....."

"Never mind that now," cried Rupert, impatiently; "Cyrilla has long forgotten it, and is such a dear little rational creature, that I have great

hopes she may discover she could not do better than take me, and have her own way all the rest of her life."

"It would be, in every respect, a most rational sort of marriage," began Melanie, slowly; "and," she added, musingly, "and one that most probably my aunt, and most certainly my stepmother, would approve."

"O I am quite aware of that," said Rupert. "I have already had more than one letter from my aunt, almost commanding me to make this proposal. If I had not admired Cyrilla immensely, such communications would have been sufficient to have made me avoid her altogether. I don't like to have a wife forced upon me; but, in this instance, I am disposed to overlook the circumstance and submit to my aunt's consent, if I can only obtain Cyrilla's."

"I shall speak to her to-night," said Melanie. "You are right to give her time to think; in fact, you might give her more time, for your love is, of course, merely that sort of quiet regard which persons devoid of sentiment usually experience."

"You need not analyze my love," said Rupert, "though, perhaps, it would bear the process quite as well as other people's; but tell Cyrilla of it..... and if she wish for time to consider, why..... I can wait a day or two.....anything reasonable;

but the sooner she can make up her mind the better, as the affair could be got up without any delay or difficulty, and I think we suit each other remarkably well!"

Melanie longed to contradict the last assertion, but she forbore. Fully aware of the advantages of such a marriage for her sister, and quite disposed to do justice to Rupert's many good qualities, she considered acquiescence on her part a duty; but Zorndorff appeared to her so eminently attractive—so infinitely superior to her cousin and all other men, that she scarcely for a moment doubted what Cyrilla's decision would be. The few hesitating words of worldly wisdom with which she that night thought it necessary to accompany her communication, was heard by her astonished sister with such indignation, and answered so quickly by apt quotations from her own speeches, that Melanie was instantly and effectually silenced. When afterwards informed of the explanation that had already taken place between Cyrilla and Zorndorff, she became, and acknowledged herself from that time forward, her nephew's warmest advocate, hoping, as she magnanimously declared to her sister, that she should be able to procure for her that domestic happiness, of which she had herself been so cruelly deprived!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE supposition that decision of mind and firmness of purpose must necessarily be appropriately embodied, is by no means uncommon ; yet very cursory observation will lead to the discovery that the person and features do not always represent these qualities, even when inherent in no common degree,—that mild, gentlemanly men can be uncommonly obstinate, and gentle, delicate women scarcely less so ; and we may, without hesitation, use this odious word to such persons, as however the hard-featured and inflexible-looking may dare to brave their friends, those whose appearance leads to the supposition of pliancy are invariably termed obstinate when they assert or act upon an opinion of their own. Cyrilla may therefore be called obstinate ; and it must be confessed that her short decided answers to her sister, and impatient, passionate

exclamations, seemed ill to suit the fragile form and youthful face of the speaker; yet, although she continued firm, unshaken even for a moment, it appeared at least more natural when, at the end of their conference, she burst into tears, and declared her unalterable resolution to keep her engagement with Zorndorff, even if it should last for twenty years!

The next morning, Rupert followed her to the drawing-room, and waited patiently while she collected her scattered sketches and drawing materials, her maid following her round the room with a portfolio, endeavouring to understand some confused directions about how the pencil-drawings were to be laid that they might not be rubbed. A few books which Rupert had given her she also took up in a hurried manner, and then showed a very evident intention of making her escape altogether. But she was recalled by him; and, half laughingly, half seriously, requested to resign herself to the horrors of a *tête-à-tête*, which, he assured her, was now quite inevitable.

"O, I have not the least objection to a *tête-à-tête* with you, if—if—"

"If I were going to talk nonsense as usual," said Rupert, smiling; "but this time you must listen to the words of wisdom, strange as they will sound to you, coming from my lips. Melanie has, of course, told you....."

“ Oh! Rupert, dear Rupert, don’t talk about that; pray, don’t. Remember all you said to me yourself the first time we met at Exfort!”

“ I don’t remember what I said, but I daresay it was something very different from what I want to say now.”

“ Perhaps so; but I remember perfectly your very words—words of wisdom they were.....You said that you had a sort of moral antipathy to the idea of cousins being anything to each other but cousins; that you would as soon think of marrying your grandmother, if you had one, as a cousin; and that you could almost hate our aunt for having cast a shadow over the commencement of our intercourse by her absurd and most improper proposition!”

“ I talked a precious lot of nonsense that day,” said Rupert, gravely.

“ But after saying all this to me,” continued Cyrilla, quite aware of the advantage she had over him, “ after saying all this, how could you expect me to.....to think of what you now propose?”

“ Very true,” said Rupert, still more gravely, “ I was, and am, a fool; that is evident.”

“ No,” cried Cyrilla eagerly, and mistaking his quiet manner for resignation or indifference; “ no, you are my dear, kind cousin, Rupert; and, believe me, no cousin could like another better than I do you.”

"Indeed!" said Rupert, looking at her inquiringly; "then I will wait until you have learned to like me better. You shall have weeks, months, a whole year if you require it! I promise to quit the army, too, and live here. You like Freilands, don't you?"

"O, so much!" answered Cyrilla; "the six weeks that I have spent here have been the happiest of my whole life!"

"And mine, too!" said Rupert; "and I do not see why we should not go on being happy, when there is nothing in the world to prevent it."

"If we could only live on just as we have done lately!" began Cyrilla, with a sigh.

"That will scarcely be possible," said Rupert; "for the President would never consent to reside altogether with me, in order that....." here he burst into a merry laugh, and then added, "You must perceive, dear Cyrilla, that nothing but a marriage can enable us to live on together here; and, therefore....."

"I am sorry for it," said Cyrilla, interrupting him hastily; "but you must not speak any more about that—at least to me."

"And to whom else?" asked Rupert.

"Any one you please. I am not so vain as to expect, not so selfish as to wish, that you should not find some one more worthy of your affection than I am."

“And I,” said Rupert, with imperturbable good-humour, “I have the vanity to think that we suit each other perfectly, and am selfish enough to hope that you may *not* find any one more worthy of your affection than I am.”

Cyrilla blushed, and walked to one of the windows, while he continued: “It is not my nature to be jealous, or I might perhaps have suspected a rival in Zorndorff; but from him I have nothing to fear. With his luxurious inclinations and ambitious plans, even you—even an angel from heaven—could not move him, if not possessed of wealth!”

“There are some passions stronger than ambition or the love of wealth,” suggested Cyrilla, in a low voice.

“Not with him. Besides, I have heard it said that he has only to stretch out his hand to find that of one of the richest heiresses in Germany placed joyfully in his.”

“I think you must be mistaken; he never made the most distant allusion to anything of the kind.”

“I should have been surprised if he had,” said Rupert; “excepting, perhaps, to Melanie.”

Cyrilla became very pale, and sat down on the nearest chair, looking up as if she expected to hear more.

“It may be nothing but a report,” continued Rupert, “but I have heard it repeatedly, and

should have mentioned it had I thought it necessary—hitherto I have had no motive—you have so invariably given me the preference whenever we came in competition, that I was vain enough to imagine you liked me better than him. It was too much to expect you, at your age, to be insensible to such extraordinary personal advantages as his!” This was said half interrogatively; but, as he received no answer, he added, “You think him very handsome of course?”

“I think beauty of very little importance for a man,” she answered evasively.

“I am glad to hear you say so, Cyrilla—Zorn-dorff, too, despises beauty in his own sex, and has often told me that he would willingly submit to be metamorphosed into the ugliest fellow that ever existed, provided wealth were bestowed on him.”

“I never heard him express an opinion of that kind,” began Cyrilla, with a look of anxiety.

“Very likely,” said Rupert; “I dare say there are many of his opinions with which he has thought it unnecessary to make you acquainted—and it is quite as well that it is so.”

“Rupert—you don’t like him, that is evident.”

“I always thought I did, until to-day,” he answered candidly; “but without apprehending that I have any just cause for jealousy, I now feel disposed to point out his faults to you, because I

am conscious that I must lately have appeared to great disadvantage by a comparison with him !”

“I don’t know that,” said Cyrilla thoughtfully. “The President says that a contrast with you makes his nephew appear a perfect egotist ; and though Melanie thinks that in your place and with your means he would be equally generous.....”

“Don’t call me generous—I have never made an effort to be so more than two or three times in all my life.”

Cyrilla looked surprised.

“My idea of generosity,” said Rupert, “is not giving of one’s abundance—that is not only a Christian duty but a debt of gratitude for having much to bestow ; the pleasure of giving, too, is a reward, if one be necessary ; but doing without something oneself in order to give to another is generosity ; and yet,” he added musingly, “that repays itself too—sometimes—often.”

“And when were you lately generous according to your ideas ?” asked Cyrilla with some curiosity.

“I see you want to make me forget the important subject we were discussing,” said Rupert smiling ; “but you must let me return to where we started, and ask you if my being your cousin is the only reason you have for rejecting me ?”

“Have you not told me yourself,” said Cyrilla, “that you considered it an all-sufficient one ?”

"But I have ceased to think it any reason whatever ; and you must forgive my offering you some advice on this occasion."

"Well, what is it?" asked Cyrilla, rather pettishly.

"That you take time to consider before you refuse my proposal. You say you like me, and in that case I think you ought to consult your mother—your sister—and....."

"No, Rupert—on this subject, and on this one alone, I think myself a better judge than my mother, sister, or any one in the world could be for me."

"Remember, Cyrilla, how very young you are!"

"I am old enough," she said, rising, "quite old enough to know the difference between the intimate friendship that I feel for you.....and.....love.....when put to the proof."

"Stay, Cyrilla," cried Rupert, catching her hand as she passed him ; "stay—your words alarm me not so much for myself as for you. Virginie was right after all—she told me you did not care for me, and that you loved Zorndorff. I did not, would not believe her, but I fear it is so. Oh, my dear cousin, listen to me for one moment ; forget all I have said about myself, and do not misunderstand my motives, when I warn you not to place your happiness in his keeping."

"You suppose he may really have thought of

marrying some one in Berlin?" said Cyrilla, trying to smile, while her lips quivered.

"People said so—it may be true, or it may not—in either case, Cyrilla, avoid him, or you will be a most unhappy woman!"

"How strongly prejudiced you are against him!" she exclaimed reproachfully.

"I can say nothing now that will not appear so to you," rejoined Rupert. "It grieves me to think that you will throw away your love, and waste the best years of your life on a man who, however much his selfish passion may lead him to monopolize you now, will end by marrying another. You will never be his wife!"

"Nor yours either," said Cyrilla, with some irritation; "so let us talk no more on this disagreeable subject."

"There is still one thing which I believe I ought to say to you," began Rupert, and then he stopped and hesitated.

"Well," she said, turning round with ill-concealed impatience, "what is it?"

"You had better not—tell my aunt that you refused to listen to my....."

"O, you need be under no apprehension on that score," said Cyrilla, with a slightly satirical smile, "I am aware how sensitive men are on such occasions, and promise you....."

"Promise me nothing," he cried, interrupting

her, while a flush of anger passed across his face. "Promise me nothing ; I spoke for your advantage and thought not at all of myself. If I am what you call sensitive, it is only to the very unkind construction you give to all my words. As far as I am concerned the whole world may know that I love you. I do so too sincerely not to hope that you may never feel the pain you have now inflicted on me."

He left the room as he spoke, and she stood for some minutes completely overcome by a succession of the most contending and afflicting emotions. A sense of having treated her cousin unkindly remained uppermost in her mind ; and after walking irresolutely up and down the room for a few minutes she slowly followed him, looked timidly at the door of his study for some time before she ventured to pronounce his name, and then, receiving no answer, she turned away, and through one of the windows caught a glimpse of him as he strode quickly down the lime-tree walk surrounded by his dogs. "He is too good-natured to be angry, and too light-hearted to be unhappy," was her thought as she descended the stairs to her sister's dressing-room.

Melanie was as usual lingering over her late breakfast ; she was also composing poetry ; her lips were parted, her eyes turned to the ceiling, while the fingers of her left hand moving as if on the

keys of a pianoforte formed the metronome of her thoughts.

“‘Lines on leaving Freilands, for Rupert.’ Shall I read them to you, Cyrilla?” she asked, not in the least observing the anxious expression of her sister’s features.

“Not just now. I must ask you a question. Tell me, Melanie, did you ever hear of Count Zorn-dorff’s being supposed to be engaged to any one I mean to a very rich heiress?”

“Never,” replied Melanie, with a look of such unfeigned surprise, that Cyrilla felt at once reassured. She took a long breath and sat down.

“Did Rupert tell you this?” asked Melanie after a pause.

“Yes; but as a report for the truth of which he could not vouch. He seemed to think you must have heard of it.”

“And so I should—if not from others, from Edouard himself, for his confidence in me is, I believe, unlimited. It is, however, possible that some heiress may have imagined that he was paying her attention, and people may have talked about it because she was an heiress; but for my part I am convinced of the truth of his assertion that you are the only woman he has ever really loved in all his life.”

“I cannot bear for a moment to suspect him of

anything dishonourable," said Cyrilla, in a faltering voice ; " but oh, Melanie, why did he recommend, almost insist on secrecy ? Surely he cannot expect me not to tell my mother ? "

" Of course not ; but it will be time enough when you see her, I should think ; and why provoke the opposition of your aunt when you are aware of the enmity that exists between her and Edouard's father, and can easily imagine how angry she will be ? In fact, if you could make up your mind not to tell any one until Edouard was promoted to some higher situation, it would be better for all parties. "

" Nothing in the world I dread so much as having anything to conceal from my mother, " observed Cyrilla, despondingly.

" And yet, " said Melanie, " I must say she is the very last person I could ever wish to confide in—she is too clever, too decided, and much too worldly to be consulted on an occasion of this kind. From her you have nothing to expect but commands to marry Rupert, and orders to return home immediately, in disgrace with all your family. I can never forget the cold irony with which she treated my love for Englmann—the unfeeling manner in which she required the mutual resignation of all our love-tokens ; but, " she added, with a smile of satisfaction—" but when I saw that Valentin only returned the half of the lock of hair I had given

him, I retained this little ugly ring, which never has and never shall leave my finger."

"I should *not* have retained the ring," said Cyrilla; "but if the President had no objection, of course no one else can."

"I never asked Wilhelm. I would not name such a thing to him, even now, for any consideration: besides, he was jealous at first; and never shall I forget his rage on finding me looking over some poems which I had written before I ever saw him. He would not listen to my explanations, dashed my little casket to atoms, and tore the papers to pieces."

"Is it possible that the President can be in a passion?" asked Cyrilla.

"I only saw him in one—*that once*—but the contrast to his usually cold satirical manner was so great, that, though surprised and shocked at his violence, I never felt anything so nearly like love for him as at that moment, and think if he had gone on being jealous and furious, I should have liked him at last; but," she continued, with a sigh, "he would not be jealous any more, and I had not courage to tell him that Valentin alone possessed my heart and occupied my thoughts!"

"Cyrilla did not seem to hear. She was looking at the watch on the toilet. "Don't you think," she observed, after a few minutes' silence, during which Melanie finished the composition of the

“Lines on leaving Freilands”—“Don’t you think you could be ready to go to Exfort in an hour? I wish so much to see Count Zorndorff again, and put an end to my present state of uncertainty.”

An unusual stillness pervaded the whole house, and especially the hitherto so gay reception-rooms, as Cyrilla and her sister stepped for the last time into the balcony, and looking round them saw Rupert sauntering homewards. He quickened his steps when he observed Melanie’s carriage before the house, and the impatient horses compelling the coachman to make frequent circuits of the gravelled space before the entrance.

“My dear Rupert,” she said, when he joined them, “you look so serious that I could almost fancy you were as sorry to lose us as we to lose you.”

“You *know* I am more so, Melanie; but I have no intention of sinking under my disappointment, or yielding to useless regrets. I shall make the most violent exertions to forget the last six weeks; and by the time we meet again I shall be nearly as jolly as ever.”

There was such an ill-concealed effort at cheerfulness in his manner, that Cyrilla, half beseechingly, held out her hand and said: “You.....are not angry with me, Rupert?”

“Heaven forbid that I should be so unreasonable,” he replied quickly. “Experience has taught

me that the affections cannot be controlled. I see," he added, turning to Melanie, "that you have written a 'farewell,' and only hope it is not an affecting one, for I don't think I could stand anything lachrymose just now."

"Lines on leaving a place where we have been happy, and saying farewell to one we love, without knowing when we may meet again, can scarcely be gay," answered Melanie; and half exulting in the thought of moving her hearers, she began in a low monotonous voice to recite them.

Music has been called the "poetry of the air." May not poetry be supposed the music of the mind? Melanie's manner of reading was so insipid, and produced a discordance so disagreeable to Cyrilla's feelings, that she at length interrupted her by saying: "No one should ever read their own compositions. You are not doing justice to your poem, Melanie: give it to me."

For a moment her eye ran quickly over the paper, and then with inexpressible grace and a correctness of emphasis, pauses, and tones that evinced both study and practice, she read the lines, awakening, in a most extraordinary degree, the sympathy of both her companions.

"You clever creature!" exclaimed Rupert, when she had ceased; "every day brings some new talent to light."

“That is not a talent,” said Cyrilla; “it is an accomplishment requiring as much practice and instruction as any other.”

“Cyrilla, you have now quite convinced me,” said Melanie, “that for a woman a careful education is more desirable than talent and accomplishments—greatly preferable to genius.”

“Perhaps so,” said Cyrilla; “we can talk about that some other time; but let us now take leave of Rupert, and go home. If parting be half as disagreeable to him as it is to me, he will wish it over.”

“What I most wish,” said Rupert quietly, “is, that a time may come when you will *feel* for me the affection which you now so unreservedly express.”

“And you do not believe me!” said Cyrilla reproachfully.

“I believe you think yourself sincere; and I am sure you like me as well as you do half-a-dozen other men who do not care about the matter. Unless something quite unforeseen should occur, we shall not meet for a long time, Cyrilla,—not, perhaps, until you have learned to think differently of me, and of others too.”

Neither Cyrilla nor Melanie wished to pursue the subject further; they left the balcony, followed by Rupert, and parted with a forced gaiety of which

they were all quite conscious, but which they supposed it necessary to assume before their servants. The higher the rank, the more frequently occasions present themselves for acting a part—most often of all, in palaces.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE fear of being overheard or interrupted by the President induced Melanie to summon her nephew to her boudoir directly she heard of his arrival at her house. He entered the room with an appearance of such joyous expectation, and advanced towards them so eagerly, that she half turned to Cyrilla, who leaned on the back of her chair, and exclaimed, "O! can you suspect or doubt, when he looks as he does now?"

"Suspect!—doubt!" repeated Zorndorff, turning from one to the other, while a shade of displeasure began to darken his handsome features.

"Tell him what I have heard, Melanie," whispered Cyrilla, timidly.

"We have been told," began Melanie, with some reluctance, "that.....there was some one of large

fortune.....to whom you were generally supposed to be.....engaged."

"Rupert your informant, of course; but I can forgive his saying anything in the first burst of annoyance at the only disappointment he has ever met with in his life."

"I knew," cried Melanie triumphantly, "I knew it was a mere report; perhaps without the slightest foundation?"

Cyrilla looked up anxiously.

Zorndorff hesitated a moment, and then replied "N—o; not altogether without foundation."

"If," said Cyrilla, hurriedly, "if an engagement exist.....tell me so at once."

"And then....." said Zorndorff, quickly, "and then?"

"And then, let ours be at an end."

"Perhaps you wish it to be so," he said, haughtily; "and in that case no explanation is necessary."

"Edouard," cried Melanie, reproachfully, "this is not the manner in which you ought to speak to Cyrilla. Do not force her to repent a promise which she made with such unreserved confidence; what she desires to know is reasonable, and you are bound to answer her."

"You are right," said Zorndorff; "and after all there is little to relate. Young men generally be-

come acquainted, often intimate, with the sisters of their friends; and I formed no exception to the rule."

"Then the person to whom Rupert referred was the sister of a friend?"

"Yes; the daughter of a banker, with the prospect of an unusually large fortune, and surrounded by applicants for her favour."

"So, it was a serious affair, after all?"

"The world said so, and my father ardently desired the connexion, as what I most wanted, wealth, was to be obtained by it; but....." he stopped and bit his lip.

"But what?" cried Melanie, impatiently. "Do you mean to say that she refused you?"

"N—o."

"Her father refused his consent, perhaps?"

"No."

"Then you refused yours," said Melanie, smiling.

Zorndorff was silent; he took up a book from the table, turned over the leaves, and showed most evidently that he wished to end the conversation.

Cyrilla was too deeply interested to observe this, and said, earnestly, "This is what I understood from Rupert; but he seemed to think that the temptation would be too great for you to resist; her fortune is so immense."

"It has become immense by the death of her brother. Rupert would of course be sceptical, if I said that such a dower would overwhelm me; it seems like a reversal of the order of things, when a woman bestows all, and a man has nothing but himself to offer."

"If you had liked her, you would not have thought of that for a moment."

"Perhaps not; but as I did not in the least care for her, it served as an excuse for terminating an affair in which my father had from the first interested himself more deeply than ever I had done."

"Is your father so very interested?" asked Cyrilla, with some alarm.

"Not altogether, in the sense you mean," answered Zorndorff, half smiling; "he was interested about Margaret, on account of her personal sufferings. She was subject to nervous attacks of a painful and dangerous description; and it was in consequence of one of these illnesses that people began to talk about an engagement, as I was obliged to spend hours beside her sofa, holding her hand in mine, her father imagining this the only preservative against a recurrence of the spasms, or whatever they were called."

"Did you observe anything like mesmeric sleep?" asked Melanie, eagerly. "Did you feel any loss of strength, as she began to recover?"

“More loss of temper than loss of strength ; I never felt so bored and irritated in my life.”

“Perhaps the irritation of her nerves had communicated itself to yours.....perhaps.....”

“Spare me,” cried Zorndorff, hastily ; “the subject is disagreeable, most painful to me ; and if,” he added, turning to Cyrilla, “if you can forgive my impatient answer just now, and are satisfied with my explanation, I hope it will never again be mentioned.”

“I am quite satisfied,” said Cyrilla ; “for if I have rightly understood you, there has been no engagement entered into, and therefore there is none to be broken off on my account ; so, I suppose, I may now write to my mother ?”

Zorndorff was silent, and for more than a minute appeared to think intently. “I have no reasonable objection,” he then said slowly ; “but I should greatly prefer your waiting until your return to Salzburg ; we have unfortunately time enough before us for explanation and discussion, and on the part of your aunt you may be prepared for the most violent opposition.”

“That I know,” said Cyrilla, “and agree with you in thinking it better to avoid giving her a subject of animadversion ; but from my mother I have never had any concealment, and her consent, even

if unwillingly given, would relieve my mind from all anxiety."

"Then write to her," said Zorndorff, "but not just yet; grant me a few weeks' delay. I have such an unconquerable misgiving that my dream of happiness will be but short.....her answer may end it.....may separate us for ever!"

"It will not, if Melanie write at the same time with me. You know mamma might not believe all I intend to say in your favour; but Melanie can write letters that would move the very stones."

"If you will both defer writing until you are about to leave Exfort, it is all I desire."

"Cyrilla, you can hardly refuse this, his only request," observed Melanie.

"Stay," cried Zorndorff, "I have another to add to it; I am still more anxious that my uncle should be kept in ignorance of our engagement until he has used his influence to procure me the situation which I hope will lead to fortune and honour. That once obtained, even he can hardly oppose my wishes, although I know he has other plans for me."

"And for Cyrilla, too," said Melanie. "He is quite persuaded she intends to marry Rupert, and has repeatedly desired me to point out all the advantages of such a marriage to her; his opposition would be strong, and not, I fear, confined to words so you see, Cyrilla....."

"I see that I am doomed to.....secrecy."

"And is it possible you ever thought of consulting Wilhelm?"

"No," replied Cyrilla, "I am too much afraid of him for that; but I certainly was equally far from intending deliberately to deceive him."

"There is no deception," said Melanie. "You will merely be silent, that is all; and surely this very innocent little mystery will have some charm for you, if a particle of romance be left in your disposition."

Cyrilla shook her head very gravely.

"Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron will not condescend to be romantic," said Zorndorff.

"The word romantic cannot prevent me from feeling that I am about to do that of which my mother would disapprove," said Cyrilla, turning her tearful eyes to her sister's face.

"That I dare not dispute," rejoined Zorndorff; "there is no doubt that your mother would greatly prefer your cousin Rupert for a son-in-law—that she would like to hear you congratulated by your friends—would like to be herself envied by all mothers who had daughters to dispose of; and, putting all the necessity for secrecy out of the case, Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron.....it is enormous presumption on my part, having ever dared to.....love you. Perhaps I might, perhaps I could, have re-

signed you, had you not yourself said that.....O, Cyrilla," he exclaimed, passionately, "write, say, do what you please—anything, but recall the words you spoke yesterday."

"I have no wish to recall them," said Cyrilla, in a low voice.

"The most distant allusion to their purport in my uncle's presence would cause my banishment from Exfort, and effectually separate us for ever."

"We shall at all events be separated in the course of a few months," said Cyrilla; "but I have sufficient reliance on you to wait patiently for better times."

"And," he persisted, "suppose these better times were very distant; suppose obstacles apparently insurmountable should be placed between us?"

"I will wait—years—a life long!"

"Will you promise?" cried Zorndorff, with unaccountable eagerness, "will you promise me *that*?"

"What I said yesterday meant it, and you may rely on me. I ask for no assurances, no promises from you; I trust you implicitly—is it too much to expect you to do the same by me?"

"How in — tolerably rational she is!" exclaimed Zorndorff, turning to Melanie. "She does not love me.....yet."

"You are ungrateful," said Melanie; can you not perceive that her regard shows itself in acts, not in words?"

"But unfortunately I am by nature suspicious, and nothing but an irrevocable promise can satisfy me."

"Irrevocable!" repeated Melanie, laughing; "one would almost suppose that you were suggesting a clandestine marriage."

"I wish I dared do so," said Zorndorff.

"That would be terrifically romantic," rejoined Melanie; "but such a thing must not be named, or even thought of for a moment." And she suddenly rose and put an end to a conference that was taking so dangerous a turn. Her jesting interpretation of his words, however, served to inspire a hope from which nothing could afterwards induce Zorndorff to swerve, and on which he rang the changes, until the idea became familiar to her, and at length formed a frequent subject of discussion.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ensuing six weeks decided Cyrilla's lot in life ; during that time the strong youthful fancy, and unconscious admiration that she felt for Zorndorff became, under her sister's auspices and his unremitting devotion, a passion of that enthusiastic description which, however much cultivation of mind and manners might enable her to conceal it, was powerful enough to blind her judgment, make her dependent on him for happiness, and even threatened to deprive her youth of its hitherto unbroken serenity.

It was the dull season at Exfort ; all Melanie's friends and acquaintances began to quit the town : the Bellegardes, with whom she was most intimate, were to visit their grandfather in the south of France ; the Vicomtesse de Rubigny to return to Italy with her husband, who was attached to the French lega-

tion at one of the minor courts ; and the President's arrangements and press of business previous to his journey to Aix confining him almost exclusively to his office,—Melanie, Cyrilla, and Zorndorff were more than ever drawn together, their intercourse less impeded or disturbed than before. An apparently unlimited confidence was established ; letters were read aloud, answers discussed, and, finally, three applications for consent to Cyrilla's engagement despatched by the same post to Salzburg. Melanie's letter was perfect, the romance subdued, the praises of her nephew judicious. Zorndorff's short, energetic, and trustful. Cyrilla endeavoured to confine herself to affectionate entreaties ; but deep feeling and painful anxiety were legible between each timid line.

The morning they were to leave Exfort, the President, as usual, waited until after the post hour, deliberately looked over all his letters, and then retired to give some final directions.

“ I have just heard from my father,” said Zorndorff, approaching Cyrilla ; “ he is going to Aix—win *him*, and all will go well.”

“ What must I do to make him like me ?”

“ Sing for him, read for him, sketch for him, and above all things, laugh and talk as you would to me. You will not find him insensible, though perhaps a little indifferent at first.”

“O!” said Cyrilla, a good deal relieved, “I don’t think, from this description, I shall be at all afraid of him.”

“Your peculiar position just now makes unusual care necessary,” said Zorndorff. “His plans for me were similar to your aunt’s for you; and he is not a man who makes allowances for weaknesses that interfere with what he considers duties.”

“But,” said Cyrilla, “there is no duty in this case.....you are not in any way bound to this Margaret von Sommerfeld.....”

“No—no—certainly not; but my father feels such compassion for her wretched state of health that he.....” Here, to Zorndorff’s great relief, the President entered the room again; and he added, as if in continuation, “In short, he is a great admirer of your sex, takes their part on all occasions, and I have not the least doubt that you will like him.”

“Of whom are you speaking?” asked the President.

“My father. I have just been telling Made-moiselle d’Adlerkron that she will see him at Aix. He has desired me to meet him there as soon as I can manage to get away from Exfort.”

“I think,” said the President, slightly frowning, “it would be better if you went to Berlin. The six months’ mourning is at an end, and there is no reasonable cause for further delay.”

“Then I must make an *unreasonable* one,” said Zorndorff, with affected unconcern; but, seeing the determined gravity of his uncle, he added, “I can do nothing until I have seen my father again, and must give him time to take his baths in peace before we think of transacting business.”

“In the meantime,” said the President, with a good deal of meaning in his manner, “in the meantime you can get over the paroxysm of admiration of which you once spoke to me, and the sooner you do so now the better. Much as I like your society, I have no wish for it at Aix. You understand me, I know.”

Aix-la-Chapelle was, twenty years ago, far from being either a handsome town or particularly pleasant place; but the warm springs of mineral water, for which it has been so long celebrated, made it then, as now, much frequented for some months every year. At the time of the Congress which had been held there in 1818, the President had first seen Melanie; and, after a very short acquaintance, she had become his wife. With a regularity which had pervaded all his movements through life, he had returned to Aix year after year, taking the same walks, observing the same diet, and using the same number of baths, until they had become, from habit, as necessary to the renovation of his strong frame as the relaxation from business was undoubtedly

beneficial to his hard-worked mind. It is true, he read the newspapers while in his bath, and wrote several hours every day, but he was no longer absorbed in business ; he grew almost cheerful, and even occasionally hazarded something like a jest with his old friend General Zorndorff, who invariably spent the greater part of every day with him.

As Melanie never walked, the President considered it incumbent on him to take Cyrilla out with him ; and, after having shown her everything worth seeing in and about the town, from the tomb of Charlemagne and the relics, to the pond of warm salt water, in which the fish flourish instead of being parboiled, she was thenceforward expected daily to ascend the Louisberg, rest for a time on the terrace, admire the view, and then return home in precisely the period of time which had been found requisite for the performance of this healthful, pleasant, and exhilarating walk during the three trials necessary to ascertain the fact. It is not improbable that she might have found herself before long in the same situation as the girl in Madame de Genlis' "*Palais de la Vérité*," who, being condemned to wander perpetually on the most luxuriant green grass, under a sky of unclouded blue, was at first enchanted with the bright prospect, but soon growing weary of it and her walk, wished for any con-

vulsion of nature that would change and terminate it. Cyrilla's companions, however, supplied by their conversation the want of variety in the scenery. The President, though not what is called agreeable, was well informed; the General was both; and the awe Cyrilla had apprehended she should feel in his presence was forgotten, when, instead of the grim-looking warrior she had unconsciously taught herself to expect, his still handsome face and youthful figure met her anxious glance. It seemed as if hard service, more than age, had partially bleached his hair, which, on his head and in his moustachios, grew thick and long, while his dark eyes, clear and expressive as his son's, were even more constantly animated; and the scarcely perceptible shade of red that coloured his sunburnt features, gave an appearance of health and freshness to his whole person.

Cyrilla's task was easy. He had known her father long and well; they had suffered dangers and hardships together; her name interested, her appearance charmed him; and the half playful, half serious efforts which she unreservedly made to please, added to the incessant eulogiums of the President, at length completely fascinated him. There was no endeavour on his part to appear a day younger than his age, there was nothing youthful in his manner, but there was also nothing aged.

He had not become garrulous, that most unfailing proof of weakening intellect. He neither spoke of his successes in love or war. If questioned about his campaigns, he described them as events in which his person was lost sight of altogether; but he had known all the celebrated men of the last war, and of them he spoke freely enough; and about what he had seen in the different camps and courts where chance had thrown him he was by no means reserved.

Cyrilla's walks on the Louisberg were very pleasant. She sprang lightly on between her companions, at first merely a listener to their conversation, latterly a participator in it. The President thought it necessary occasionally to affect a little parental authority when, complaining of heat, she threw off a scarf or shawl, and let her bonnet hang by its strings on her shoulders. Not so the General. He laughed, seemed to enjoy, and openly encouraged all her childish wilfulness.

One day, on their return, they found Melanie sitting at a table covered with newly arrived letters. Cyrilla's colour changed rapidly as she received the long-expected one from her mother, and retired with it to a distant window. Melanie seemed lost in thought, the President and General so occupied, that for nearly half an hour the silence was unbroken excepting by the occasional rustling of paper

or breaking of seals. At length the General observed: "How pleasantly and quickly our time here has passed this year, Wilhelm! Edouard writes that he will join us here, though I scarcely expected him to do so, as he refused last year; and I know he particularly dislikes Aix."

The President looked at Cyrilla. She was gazing into the street, and appeared totally uninterested in what had been said. "All right there at least," he thought.

But Cyrilla had not heard one word.

"He says," continued the General, referring to his letter, "he says he can remain here a week or two, and that he hopes to induce his aunt and her sister to make some excursions with him."

"I shall be delighted," said Melanie, with a faint laugh and embarrassed look, as she moved quickly across the room to Cyrilla, and asked, in a whisper, "Good or bad news?"

"Good—that is, consent; but given reluctantly—O, so reluctantly, that it scarcely deserves the name. There are a few lines enclosed for you and for him, but the letter seems to have been delayed more than a week in Exfort!"

"Edouard kept it, hoping to bring it to you himself. As, however, he cannot be here until next week, and finds suspense intolerable, he has desired me to write to him directly, but on no ac-

count to let either his father or Wilhelm know that I do so."

"I hoped," said Cyrilla, with a sigh, "that there would soon be an end to all this secrecy."

"O, my dear creature, you do not know how poor dear Edouard has become entangled within the last few weeks. He has evidently been too compassionate, and if you do not assist him, I fear he will be sacrificed."

"Sacrificed!"

"Hush; wait until these two men have left the room: you see they are just going."

"Well!" said Cyrilla, as the door closed on them.

"Let me read you part of his letter," said Melanie, her eyes glancing quickly over the closely written pages. "'Accumulated annoyances..... unsolicited affection.....cursed feeling of commiseration'.....no, that's not it..... But here he says: 'And just when I had reason to hope that I should never hear their odious names mentioned again, I received a letter from old Sommerfeld, to say that he was ill, and would, in all probability, soon follow his son to the grave;—that if his daughter's fortune were twenty times greater than it is, there was no one on whom he would so willingly bestow her and it as on me. My very objection to be enriched by her had so raised me in

his opinion, as well as hers, that he joined her in wishing to make the most liberal settlement on me, so that I should in no way feel dependent on either of them.' ”

“ Very magnanimous ! ” said Cyrilla, breathing quickly ; “ these offers seem to have had weight with him, too. You may tell him when you write that he is at liberty to accept them. ”

“ Wait until you hear the rest, ” said Melanie, and she continued to read :—“ I need not tell you that this proposal made no sort of impression on me ; but when the old man added that his unfortunate child had been ill since the time she had last seen me, and that she was at times almost quite insensible for hours, I could not refuse to pity and believe him. I have seen her in that state myself, and the question is now simply, is she or am I to be sacrificed ? ” Melanie paused, and looked up.

“ He seems to forget me altogether ! ” observed Cyrilla with some bitterness.

“ O no ; but he imagines you do not care for him as he does for you. You have never in any way betrayed the extent of your regard for him. He asks a proof now : give it him, and all doubts are at an end for ever ! ”

“ He shall have it, ” cried Cyrilla, with heightened colour and flashing eyes. “ I release him from all his vows and promises. ”

“He desires exactly the contrary,” said Melanie, eagerly. “He has requested me to induce you to consent to—a—private—marriage!”

“I dare not, I dare not!” cried Cyrilla, with a look of terror; but in her heart she rejoiced that he gave such a proof of his determination to reject the wealth she knew he so ardently desired to possess. “Dearest Melanie, you cannot advise me to take such a step?”

“You say your mother consents.....” began Melanie.

“Yes; and she dislikes long engagements, too; but she certainly never thought of anything of this kind, and would never permit it.”

“We cannot expect her to trust Edouard as we do. She does not know him yet,” said Melanie; “but let me read the rest of his letter to you—‘I confess without hesitation that I have not my father’s or uncle’s stern rectitude of character. I cannot, unmoved, see any woman suffer; and this weakness has been the cause of all my embarrassments. Even idolizing Cyrilla, as you know I do, I will not, cannot answer for myself, if I must submit to the ordeal of a few scenes such as I know await me in Berlin. Nothing but the most solemn engagement—nothing but a previous marriage can enable me to brave them. Use, therefore, all your influence: o nduce Cyrilla to consent to my plan.

Chance favours us : a young clergyman, a friend of mine, to whom I have just had an opportunity of being useful, is now in Spa, which, you know, is so near Aix that we can go there any day we please. In trusting this young man, we run no risk. I am convinced that we may depend on his secrecy. Tell Cyrilla that my life's happiness is in her hands, and entreat her not to drive me to despair by being inexorable.' "

Melanie paused, folded up her letter, and then said : " Your answer, Cyrilla ; I must write."

" I cannot consent.....Melanie," she added uneasily. " Do you think that Edouard has been quite candid with us ? Do you not find this proposal of the Sommerfelds odd—in fact, indelicate, if we may not suppose a—previous engagement ?"

" Not at all, my dear," said Melanie, impatiently. " the people are enormously rich, wish for rank, and take it for granted he must be merely making difficulties to enhance his value.....Though you cannot, I *can* imagine him spending hours with the nervous, melancholy sister of his friend, and nothing more natural than that she should take a fancy to him, and determine to indulge it like a spoiled child, as she no doubt is. Come, Cyrilla, relent a little.....or Edouard may go to Berlin without seeing you !"

" Let him go !" cried Cyrilla, petulantly.

"After he has passed his ordeal, as he calls it, I shall have more confidence in him."

"Are you serious?"

"Perfectly ; but he has no idea of going to Berlin. I feel sure he will come here and insist..... O, how I wish I could go home until all these difficulties were removed ! You see he is unreasonable in his demands : no assurances, no promises will satisfy him !"

"He *loves* !" cried Melanie, enthusiastically ; "and in your place I could more than pardon : I should rejoice to find him unreasonable ! Had Valentin Englmann possessed such energy and ardour, how different would have been my fate ; but he only talked of the deprivations to which I might be subjected, the trials I should have to endure, and himself proposed.....urged me to yield to the wishes of my family !"

"I cannot help thinking he was very unselfish," said Cyrilla.

"And I cannot help thinking," rejoined Melanie, "that it is a great pity you could not make up your mind to marry Rupert. I perceive every day more and more that he was right when he said you would suit each other exactly. The measure of passionless regard which would have perfectly satisfied him will drive poor Edouard to distraction !"

She left the room while uttering the last words ; and the letter which she then wrote brought Zorndorff to Aix immediately. A stormy scene ensued, in which Cyrilla showed more firmness than he had expected ; and he, in consequence, adopted a system of acting but too well calculated to work on the feelings of a youthful and warm heart. He pretended to be offended at her having questioned him again about his connexion with the Sommerfelds ; indignant at her doubting his word ; and then quarrelled with her in the most decided manner. All intercourse between them ceased. He never by any chance addressed her—avoided her whenever he could do so without rudeness—and gave full play to the naturally melancholy expression of his beautiful countenance. At first Cyrilla was angry ; then she became offended ; at last unhappy. The President began by degrees to perceive a change in the manners of his gay sister-in-law. She seldom sang, no longer made amusing sketches, and complained not unfrequently of fatigue during their walks. Zorndorff never accompanied them after the first day, and had also declined joining any of their excursions in the neighbourhood, although in his letters he had been the first to propose them. The President was sorry for Cyrilla, but highly approved of his nephew's supposed prudence.

To Cyrilla a continuance of this state of affairs became intolerable. All her efforts to conceal her sufferings from her tormentor were vain. She knew that he read every feeling of her heart, but he did not apparently triumph in her struggles. He evidently became himself from day to day more depressed.

At length she summoned courage one morning to sit down beside the President, and quietly but resolutely requested him to make arrangements for her immediate return home. While she was still speaking, Zorndorff entered the room, and involuntarily her voice sank, while her colour rose in the presence of the unwished-for auditor. The President paused for more than a minute before he answered: "Of course, of course, my dear child, if you wish it; but you must promise to return to us again in a few months—in a very few months. You have become the life of our house, Cyrilla, and I should like to keep you altogether now."

"You are very kind," she said, with a faint smile, and then added, in a still lower voice: "Mamma, in her last letter, seemed so anxious for my return, that if you could manage it, I should like to leave to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" he exclaimed. "Why, to-morrow you are going to Spa."

“ I don’t intend to go to Spa.”

“ Don’t you ?” said the President, with some surprise ; “ and yet I remember hearing you say you wished to see the ruins of Franchimont, and that you intended to buy a work-box for your sister.” As Cyrilla was silent, he continued : “ Melanie will not give up the party to Spa, I fear ; but a day more or less is of little importance. We shall return to Exfort the end of this week, and then you can have Madame Ehrhardt from Freilands to travel home with you.”

Accustomed to dictate, he considered further discussion needless ; and, having looked at his watch, gathered up his papers and left the room. Cyrilla rose precipitately, intending to follow him, but Zorndorff sprang forward, and whispered a few words of such urgent entreaty, that she stopped. Some reproaches followed ; then entreaties for forgiveness, if he had offended ; finally, a passionate appeal to her heart. Cyrilla hesitated—pardoned—and then—burst into tears. Zorndorff saw his advantage, and pursued it. Those who have had “ love passages” in their lives (and who has not ?) know how difficult it is to quarrel again at the very moment of reconciliation ; when Zorndorff, with fervid earnestness and tearful eyes, again whispered : “ You will go to Spa ?” She had not courage to

say no, and all her efforts afterwards to moderate his expectations were vain. He left her to make the necessary arrangements with Melanie.

While still standing motionless in a state of painful mental bewilderment, her two elderly friends came to remind her of her promise to walk with them. Almost mechanically, she that day moved on between them, but was so silent and abstracted, that, after a few fruitless efforts to enliven her, they also became taciturn; the thoughts of both centred in her, but were as different as could well be imagined.

CHAPTER XIX.

“WHAT are you about, Edouard?” cried the General the next day, when he saw his son rather ostentatiously cramming the pockets of the carriage with books. “What are you about? Was there ever such a dull insensible fellow in this world? One would think you were going to travel with me or your uncle.....if you can read in such society, I disown you altogether.”

“And I adopt him,” cried the President, with unusual warmth. “Edouard, you are acting like a man of honour, and I admire and appreciate your conduct more than I can here express; but you understand me.”

He did; and as he bent forward, under pretence of assisting his aunt in her search for her note-book, he blushed in that dim, scarcely perceptible manner peculiar to very pale men; but the veins on his

temples swelled high and purple at the praise which he felt at that moment he did not deserve in the sense it had been bestowed on him. As they drove off, he consoled himself with the idea, that his unpremeditated quarrel with Cyrilla, and no effort on his part, had, on the present occasion, tended to deceive his uncle.

Spa is about ten leagues from Aix-la-Chapelle, and is situated in the mountains of the Ardennes, occupying a valley round which hills covered with woods form an amphitheatre, and give it various and picturesque environs that tempt the inhabitants to continual excursions. To the well-known ruins of Franchimont the travellers went at once. They thought they might be questioned about them, or the view from them, and they wished to have the ensuing morning free.

The use which Zorndorff and Cyrilla made of this freedom was to bind themselves by vows as solemn as they were secret. It was at the Gêroustère spring, about two miles from Spa, that they met the clergyman; and in the keeper's house, where he had procured a room for them, the marriage-ceremony was performed; not, however, until Zorndorff had explained at some length to his very dissatisfied, and evidently most unwilling friend, that whatever legal formalities had been omitted from want of time, should be carefully attended to subse-

quently, and that at all events there was every probability that the ceremony would be performed again at some not very distant period in a more public manner, and in presence of their mutual relations. When they were to *exchange* rings, as is usual in Germany, there was an embarrassed pause. Zorndorff, after a moment's hesitation, drew from the little finger of his left hand a small but very massively set seal-ring, on which his arms were engraved, and placed it on the third finger of Cyrilla's *right* hand (the left is only used to denote a left-handed or unequal marriage), then took from her a small twisted hoop, gave it the place previously occupied by his signet, and murmured, as he did so, the words, "for ever."

After their return to Spa, when speaking of this circumstance, and laughing about having forgotten the mystic sign of eternity, Zorndorff told Cyrilla that at their second marriage he would reclaim *his* ring, but that hers should never leave his finger, and was destined to accompany him to the grave.

"And this second marriage?" cried Melanie, eagerly, "when is it likely to take place?"

"That depends on circumstances over which I have no control," replied Zorndorff, gravely.

"It will not, I hope, be necessary ever to mention what occurred this morning at the G roust re," continued Melanie, walking up and down the room

uneasily. "Wilhelm would be furious.....I am beginning to.....think.....it was a very unadvised—hasty act.....I.....I wish to heaven I had not consented."

She felt that she had more than consented—she had promoted. After a long pause she began again : "A painful presentiment of evil is coming over me. Cyrilla your mother Edouard, your father.....Good gracious, how can you talk in that way, and be happy at such a moment!"

This was addressed to her companions, but they heard her not; seated together on a sofa, they seemed to have no thought but for each other. Cyrilla smiled and blushed; while Zorndorff whispered bright visions of future happiness and assurances that the ensuing two or three years would be more endurable to them both, now that the doubts and anxieties of an uncertain engagement were at an end, and they could enjoy the tranquillizing certainty that, happen what would, they were bound to each other for life. As Melanie approached them, Cyrilla drew her down beside her; while Zorndorff continued talking, totally undisturbed by her presence. She listened, and tried to forget her apprehensions, but in vain; his unusually high spirits alarmed her more and more; she proposed ordering the carriage to return to Aix. He would not listen to her; and when she commenced a half earnest ex-

postulation with Cyrilla, he playfully waved her away, saying, that no one should in future interfere between him and his wife.

Melanie tried to laugh; but tears stood in her eyes as she walked to a window, and watched some black clouds which began to gather over the town, foreboding a thunder-storm. With the first flash of lightning, a light travelling carriage appeared in the street, and dashed furiously on towards the hotel. "Edouard, Edouard," she exclaimed almost breathlessly, "here is your father, and I do believe your uncle is with him."

"What the devil has brought them here?" cried Zorndorff, starting up. "Did they say anything to you about intending to come?"

"On the contrary, they both refused, and said nothing would induce them to submit to the examination of their luggage on the frontiers; and yet your father's carriage is packed as if for a long journey, and your servant that you purposely left at Aix is with him."

"Then," said Zorndorff, "he has got letters from those cursed Sommerfelds, who seem determined to hunt me down. Any woman but Margaret would have perceived long ago that I all but—hated her. Cyrilla, dearest, our trials are beginning sooner than I expected; my father is violent, and a storm is now inevitable, but it is unnecessary

that you should witness it—I will meet him alone. If he insist on my going with him at once to Berlin, I shall consent; it will be but two days sooner than I intended; and, watched by him and my uncle, as I should be in case I refused, we could enjoy but little of each other's society." He left the room by one door, as his father and the President entered by another.

They looked round with some surprise; it was evident they had expected to find him where in fact he had been a few minutes before. The President said something about "business,"—a word which his lips seemed to form from habit; the General asked for his son, and on hearing Melanie's answer, prepared to seek him. The President drew him aside, and whispered, "Do not be too hasty: though he confessed that he admired, he has so evidently avoided her of late, that I am still inclined to think he has not spoken to her—perhaps she knows nothing at all about the matter; before you see him, let me at least question Melanie." He turned to his wife, and in his most solemn and severe manner requested her to accompany him into the adjoining room.

Cyrilla looked anxiously towards the General; she knew he liked her, and all her hopes now centred in him. Though aware that she dared not confess what had occurred that morning, she wished him to speak to her about his son; she thought he

might be induced to give up his mercenary plans for him, if aware of their mutual attachment, and she now felt that she could acknowledge hers without reserve. Surely a man who could speak so gently, and look so kindly, must value affection more than money! Cyrilla's furtive glance towards her usually cheerful companion made her heart sink; he appeared to have suddenly grown taller, as with head erect, his arms folded, his brows contracted, his lips firmly pressed together, he impatiently paced the long apartment, stopping however, occasionally, to fix his dark searching eyes upon her face. There was something terrific in his glance, something which she did not understand; but she recoiled before it and felt alarmed. Perhaps he observed this, for the firmness of his step relaxed; he stopped more frequently, and at length said, "I am sorry you have seen me in this state of irritation; I fear it may eradicate any more agreeable impressions I may have been so fortunate as to have made on you, during our six weeks' acquaintance."

"You have made me a little afraid of you I confess," answered Cyrilla, attempting to smile; "I am not at all courageous—a loud word, or an angry look, intimidates me at once."

"That is the very last thing in the world I should wish to do," said the General, still standing

erect before her. "I have received letters of a most unpleasant, most painful description, but—but—if you have nothing to do with this unfortunate affair—or if you are only unconsciously the cause, why, I have no right—I have no wish—in fact, you cannot change your nature, and become disagreeable instead of charming, or ugly instead of—of—pshaw!" and he again commenced his walk.

"I have no wish to be either disagreeable or ugly," observed Cyrilla, demurely looking up at him.

"To know you well, and not to—like—you, is impossible," began the General after a pause.

"I am very glad to hear you say so," rejoined Cyrilla, once more breathing freely; "there is no one I have ever taken so much pains to please as you."

"Indeed! I feared it was the vanity inherent to man, which sometimes made me imagine this: my natural understanding refused to believe that one like you could feel any interest in an old soldier such as I am."

"I never saw you look old until just now," said Cyrilla; "and it was not exactly old either, but terrible. I think you have made me even more afraid of you than I am of the President, and yesterday I could have spoken to you as I would to—to—Melanie."

"I wish," he said, leaning over the end of the sofa while his features by degrees began to resume their usual expression, "I wish you would forget having seen me angry."

"I cannot, until you have been for some time quite yourself again."

He paused, and seemed to deliberate. "I do not quite understand you," he began slowly; "may I ask you a question or two?"

"As many as you please," answered Cyrilla, hoping that at last he was about to name his son.

"You said just now, that you had taken trouble to please me. You did so, perhaps, and now tell me so without reserve, because I am old enough to be—your father?"

Cyrilla blushed and turned away her head.

"And you sang all that old-fashioned music I brought you—merely to humour the fancies of an *old* man?"

There was something so gentle, so resigned, in the half-sigh with which this was said, that Cyrilla looked up with some surprise, and said, "I never thought about your age; I sang whatever and whenever you desired it, because I wished you to like me."

"You would not, however, be so candid," observed the General, smiling, "if I were a score of years younger?"

“Perhaps not.”

“And suppose,” he continued, “suppose, besides liking, I were to admire you as if I were that score of years younger?”

“Like and admire me as much as you please,” said Cyrilla, “but never again look at me as you did just now!”

“*Never!*” exclaimed the General, and snatching her hand, he pressed it to his lips; a moment after, it seemed to turn to a torpedo within his grasp—he gazed at it as if all his faculties had become benumbed. Cyrilla saw that his eyes were fixed on the ring she had that morning received from Zorn-dorff; she saw that he recognised it, and was not sorry that the unusual form of the shield and heavy setting spared her the pain of a partial explanation which she rather desired than otherwise. To remove any lingering doubts, he raised her hand so as to let the light fall on the seal, and immediately perceived his own arms. “That ring,” he said, slowly, “has been given you by Edouard—my son.”

Cyrilla did not speak, and he continued, “I fear, I greatly fear, he did not tell you how it came into his possession, or you would have preferred any other gift, perhaps have refused to accept of any one from him.”

Cyrilla looked up inquiringly.

“ You have most probably never heard the name of Margaret von Sommerfeld ? ”

“ Count Zorndorff spoke of her as a person that *you* very much wished him to marry ” began Cyrilla.

“ A person that *he* very much wished to marry,” said the General, sternly; “ a person whose affections he sought and gained many years ago, while still a student. At that time he wished to marry; but I feared his giving up his profession, and her father equally dreaded his want of steadiness: it was therefore postponed; but after a long and dangerous illness, from which she is scarcely yet recovered, a solemn betrothal took place, and *that* was the ring she gave him in the presence of all her assembled relations. The successive deaths of a sister and two brothers have hitherto prevented the fulfilment of this engagement, but her father is now dying, and wishes for the marriage without further delay. Henceforward procrastination becomes treachery towards a woman whose affections has been undeviating so many years—who has stood all the various trials to which he has not scrupled to subject her, and whose life, they say, depends on his future conduct to her. What *his* intentions or wishes may be now, I shall not inquire; he is bound in honour to make Margaret his wife—and his wife she shall be,” he added again, walking up

and down the room, "his wife she shall be before many weeks are over."

Cyrilla, completely confounded by this lucid statement, the truth of which she did not for a moment doubt, sat stupified, until he pronounced the last words. Their dire import to her, however, roused her at once, and, clasping her hands, she stammered: "But he does not care for her; he does not like her!"

"He *did* care for her, or pretended to do so, which is the same thing in the eyes of the world. Her brothers are dead, her father dying, she has no near relation to call him to account; but *I* have promised to be her guardian, and I have never yet broken a promise, nor shall a son of mine do so. I would rather," he added, vehemently, "I would rather see him, with all his youth, talent, and beauty, stretched on his bier, than that a shade of dishonour should pass over our house!"

He left her, and she sat in a sort of stupor, she knew not how long. Her sister and the President entered the room; she heard the former reproach her husband for having kept her in ignorance of so important a circumstance as her nephew's engagement, and heard the President answer:

"I should have told you long ago, Melanie, had you been as reasonable as you are a clever woman. Your actions are irreproachable, but your theories

are of so fantastic and romantic a description, that I feared when you discovered that prudence more than love had directed Edouard's choice, you might have endeavoured to disgust him with the prospect of comfort and affluence that awaited him."

"Comfort and affluence!" repeated Melanie, disdainfully. "Say, rather, that you and his father wish him to sell himself for gold!"

"He chose for himself," rejoined the President, "of his own free will; what his motives were I can only surmise. His father is not mercenary, and would never have required him to improve his fortune by marriage; but having pledged himself as he has done, he has now only the alternative of honour or dishonour."

Melanie approached Cyrilla, and whispered: "I have confessed nothing; for my sake, for heaven's sake, be silent, and trust to Edouard."

Cyrilla bent her head, without attempting to speak.

The General and his son entered the room immediately afterwards. Never had their resemblance to each other been so apparent as at the moment when, pale and agitated, they both came towards Cyrilla to take leave. The former murmured a few scarcely intelligible words, and then turned to the President and Melanie. Zorndorff stood still and contemplated Cyrilla, as she sat, or rather reclined

on the sofa, pale, her eyes cast down, and trembling in all the apprehension of the explosion of family ire which she momentarily expected.

"Come," cried the General, hastily; "delay is worse than useless now."

"I cannot leave her so," cried Zorndorff. "Let me speak to her; I ask but a few minutes—alone," he added, looking round the room, "or at least only in presence of my aunt."

His father moved towards the door, as if to comply with his request. The President stopped him: "Edouard can have nothing to say which we may not hear; he has evidently been less candid than he ought to have been with Cyrilla. Let him express his regret and....."

"Ungenerous!" exclaimed Zorndorff, angrily. "I might insist.....but no matter.....your presence may be a restraint to her—to me it shall be none. Cyrilla, dearest Cyrilla!" he cried, seating himself beside her in the very place he had occupied before his father's arrival. "Will you endeavour to believe that my ungovernable love has alone induced me to deceive you about this most unfortunate engagement? You must remember how long I avoided you!—how I struggled with my traitorous inclinations!"

Cyrilla remembered but too well.

“You will not answer? Give me at least your hand in token of forgiveness.”

The hand was as cold as ice, and some tears from Zorndorff’s eyes fell upon it. “Speak, Cyrilla,” he said, in a voice choked by emotion. “I prefer reproaches to this silence.”

“Tell me.....what.....I *may* say,” she murmured, slowly, “and I will say it.....if I can.”

Zorndorff felt all the meaning of these words, and answered, hurriedly: “Say that you forgive—that you will endeavour to forget that I have deceived you; say that you will still rely on me, and believe in my unalterable affection.”

“She may forgive you, Edouard,” said his father, stepping forward; “but to your affection she can have no further claim.”

“Speak, Cyrilla.....” cried Zorndorff, beseechingly, without appearing to have heard his father’s words.

“I.....forgive.....” faltered Cyrilla.

“And you will rely on me, no matter how much appearances may be against me. You will believe that in heart and soul I am yours, let what will occur?”

Again his father attempted to interfere. Zorndorff waved his hand impatiently, and continued, in a low impassioned voice: “Cyrilla, you once said

that you would wait years—a *life*—if necessary ; these were your words—your own words ! Promise, oh promise me that now !”

“She shall not !” cried the President, coming towards them with a frown of displeasure. “She shall not ! How dare you ask her to speculate on death—to rejoice over a grave ? Thoughts less defined than these, Edouard, have led to crimes of the deepest die.”

“Promise—promise,” reiterated Zorndorff, still more vehemently, as he drew her unresisting form towards him.

“Can I do otherwise ?” she whispered. “Am I not bound to you for life ?”

“Cyrilla,” began the President, severely, “I know not how to express my astonishment at conduct so unlike what I expected from you.....if these whispered words were indeed the promise he.....”

“Enough—enough,” cried Zorndorff, starting from the sofa ; delay is torture now—let us go.”

He left the room, followed by his father and uncle. Cyrilla clasped her hands, and sat motionless, until roused by the sound of a departing carriage ; then she pressed her hand over her eyes, looked round the room, approached her sister, who was sitting at a little distance, and fixing her eyes on her earnestly, she said, slowly, “Is not this like a dreadful dream ? to see, and hear, and sit spell-

bound, not daring to speak! How will all this end?"

"Heaven knows," answered Melanie, despondingly. "Wilhelm says that the engagement is of a peculiarly binding description; that at Edouard's own request papers have been signed and countersigned, and I know not what all! Edouard's silence may be excused on the plea of headstrong passion dreading a check; but Wilhelm's systematic secrecy towards me is unpardonable."

"What was it he said about death and a grave?" asked Cyrilla, anxiously.

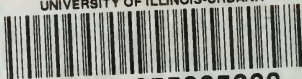
"I don't know, dear; I was so afraid that Edouard, in a moment of irritation, would confess your marriage, that I paid little attention to any one but him; most probably it was something about that woman.....Wilhelm says she is in a very precarious state of health."

"Perhaps he meant that she might die.....and if she should, may not I be indirectly the cause? O Melanie," she added, kneeling beside her sister, and resting her head on the arm of her chair, "pray with me, pray for me, for you have helped to lead me into this temptation."





UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 055295338